

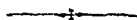
# INTRODUCING INDIA

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Second Edition

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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

At the suggestion of friends two additional Chapters have been written for this edition, the Chapter on "Indian Women", and the Chapter on "Awakening." Certain quotations from other authors have been omitted in this edition without disturbing the argument or sense of continuity in the various Chapters.

11th May 1943.

L. H. A

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

No apology is needed for bringing out a book on the deathless heritage of India and her priceless contribution to the world. A little book of this kind can hardly lay claim to originality; as a matter of fact, the writer has earnestly endeavoured to quote extensively from well known books on India, chiefly from the published works of Swami Vivekananda and from the monumental publication issued in memory of his Master—*The Cultural Heritage of India*.

With the single exception of Mahatma Gandhi plus stray reference here and there to Sri Aurobindo Ghose, sages, scientists and heroes of India, living at the present day, have not been mentioned in this book. Variations in the spelling of names and certain ancient words and phrases have been rendered necessary for obvious reasons.

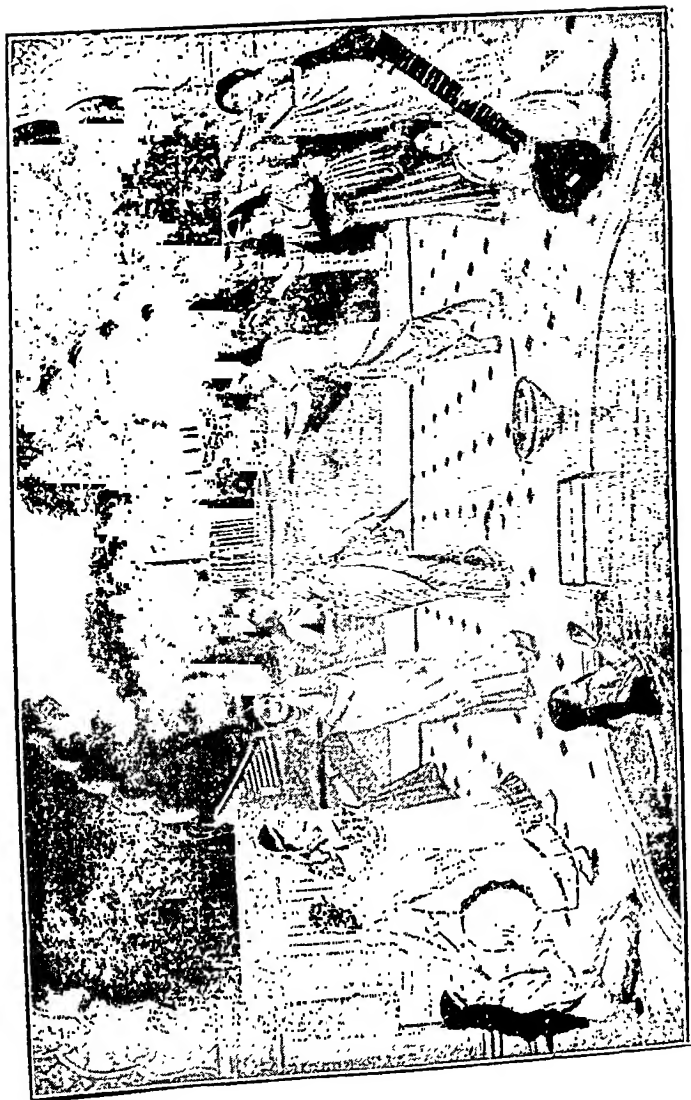
31st October 1942.

L. H. AJWANI

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KRISHNA AND THE GOPIS.

## CHAPTER I.

### "RICHEST PRIZE."

Writing in the American magazine, *Look*, (dated June 30th, 1942), Major George Fielding Eliot calls India "Richest Prize of the War," and says: "What is India? It is a massive land, a subcontinent half as big as all Europe. It stretches from the desert of Baluchistan in the west to the humid jungles of the Brahmaputra River in the east; from the high and barren Hindu Kush and ice-capped Himalayas in the north to the tropical riches of Madras, Mysore and Bangalore in the south.

India's Emblem:  
The Cow

"How rich is India? Its unexploited sources of iron ore and hydro-electric power are greater than those of any country but the United States. It has almost unlimited manganese; it has coal: it has 49 per cent of the world's bauxite (from which aluminium is refined). It follows the United States as a producer of cotton and is a world leader in jute, sugar, mica, leather and hides."

Major Eliot views India from the point of war strategy and comes to the conclusion that India is the richest prize of the war. He who holds India holds the key to the dominion of the world. The possession of India is the supreme and deciding factor in the shifting politics of the nations of the world, not only because India has the largest man-power of any country (containing as it does one-fifth of the population of the world), and it controls the ocean highways and has land communications with the most important countries of the world, but also because India in spite of a most thorough and systematic exploitation by the hands of foreigners, is still the richest, most productive

tive, and the only self-sufficient country in the world. Moreover, India's men and women, in spite of their work and grinding poverty, maintain their tradition of being the most cosmopolitan, the most hospitable, and the most forgiving and generous nation on the earth. Other nations have as their emblems such animals as the lion, the eagle and the bear, and the whole trend of their activity has been to aggrandise themselves at the cost of their weaker neighbours and fellow human beings. India's symbol throughout the ages has been the Cow; and like the patient, forgiving, milk giving cow, India has been pouring out her richest treasures and allowing herself to be bled white,—for the sake of others.

Every other country has carefully planned and made laws to keep out aliens; every other nation has tried to enrich itself by erecting tariff barriers, and imposing restrictions on those who would seek to take away its products and wealth outside its shores and frontiers. India, alone, has kept her doors wide open for all and sundry, and proved a foster-mother to the distressed aliens and the refugees. The Iranian Zoroastrians, fleeing before the wrath of the invading Muslims, found a ready welcome in India; the early Christians, unable to find any other country to harbour them, established a home on the west coast of India. The Jews, wanderers over the earth, and confined to ghettos in other lands, were received with open arms by the people of India. The western nations came to India in search of gold and spice and were treated right royally as *guests*.

The lure of India and India's wealth has attracted the imagination of foreigners from the dawn of ages. They have pictured India as a country flowing with milk and honey, and littered with gold and jewels, elephants and tigers, magicians and mystics. It is noteworthy that Columbus set out on his

## RICHEST PRIZE

epoch-making voyages not to discover another world but to discover India by another route than that which was known previously. And the very titles "West Indies", "American Indians", and "Indiana", testify to the paramount hold India had over the adventurers and navigators of old. True it is that nowadays the tourist from the rich lands of Europe or America views with dismay the poverty-ridden, disease-stricken inhabitants of India. He finds his illusions shattered at a stroke. Perhaps only at the durbars of the Indian Princes or the British Governors, he sees something to justify the many allusion to "the wealth of Ormus or of Ind." If he remains here sufficiently long such exceptions only prove the rule to him, viz, that the vast majority of Indians live perilously near starvation or cannot live at all; they simply die of hunger and disease. But if he is a careful observer he notes at once that the country and its resources are fully ample to support not only the whole population but innumerable other races as well. The people of India are poor because the Mother-India-Cow serves as the milk cow for so many others that hardly any milk is left for her own children. The cow that is Kamadhenu cow; others has only dry udders to present to the mouths of her starving children. For instance, it has been computed that one in four of the inhabitants of Great Britain live directly or indirectly on what India has to give to this great country.

Truly has it been said that "India is an epitome of the whole world". If by some great upheaval or nature's mysterious movements the rest of the world were submerged or scorched or destroyed and India alone left stand, there would be the old world and its products the vegetable or mineral or animal kingdom quite intact.

Epitome of the  
World.

as it were. The land of the Himalayas (the highest and most picturesque mountains in the world), of the great river systems of Sindhu (Indus), Ganges, Jamna, Brahmaputra, Cauvery, Godawari, Nerbadda and Tapti, and of great deserts and plateaus, presents a variety of climate, flora and fauna, and natural scenes, which cannot be paralleled elsewhere. In his well-known book on Hind Superiority, Har Bilas Sarda says that India "possesses all the leading features of other lands—the most bewitching scenery, the most fertile soil, the most dense forests, the highest mountains, some of the biggest rivers and intensely cold seasons, may be found along with arid, treeless deserts, sandy waterless plains, and the hottest days. To a student of humanity or of Nature, India even now is most picturesque, and is the most interesting country in the world."

Sarda quotes two European writers who have been eloquent in praising India and the glorious achievements of Indians. One is Count Bjornstjerna, who says: "But everything is peculiar, grand, and romantic in India—from the steel-clad knight of Rajasthan to the devoted Brahman in the temple of Benares; from the fierce Mahratha on his fleet and active steed to the Nabob moving gently on his elephant; from the Amazon who chases the tiger in the jungle, to the Bayadere who offers in *volupte* to her gods. Nature, too, in this glorious country is chequered with variety and clad in glowing colours: see the luxuriance of her tropical vegetation and the hurricane of her monsoon; see the majesty of her snow covered Himalayas and the dryness of her deserts; see the immense plains of Hindustan and the scenery of her lofty mountains; but, above all, see the immense age of her history and the poetry of her recollections."

The second writer is Professor Max Muller, who says: "If I were to look over the whole world to find out the

country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power, and beauty that nature can bestow—in some parts *a very paradise on earth*—I should point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant, I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we here in Europe—who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and the Romans, and of one Semitic race the Jewish—may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life, not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life, again I should point to India." And again ; "Whatever sphere of the human mind you may select for your special study, whether it be language, or religion, or mythology, or philosophy, whether it be laws or customs, primitive art or primitive science; everywhere you have to go to India, whether you like it or not, because some of the most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of men are treasured up in India and in India only." (*India: What can it teach us ?*)

India is, indeed, the "richest prize" in the world not only because of her geographical position, vast resources, illimitable man-power, and complete self-sufficiency in all respects, but also because, even in her degradation, she has a culture, a religiosity, a message to give to the world which no other country in the world has or can give. India's value to the world consists above all in being a repository of the eternal truths of life which have been grouped under the comprehensive name of *Dharma*, a

word almost untranslatable in the languages spoken outside India.

## CHAPTER 2.

### THE FUNDAMENTAL UNITY OF INDIA.

India is a much misrepresented country. Even the Indians themselves do not always realise the truth about themselves and their country. They glibly repeat statements made by inaccurate or biased observers and historians and willingly traduce themselves. In this chapter will be pointed out one of the most glaring of these misconceptions and misrepresentations.

The first and the most persistent of the mischievous statements made about India is that there is not nor has ever been a *unity* of ideals or culture or political or national feeling in India, and that any feeling of patriotism or national feeling that may be found in India is a recent growth, the result of British rule in India. In spite of the fact that able writers like Professor Radhakumud Mookerji have disproved this contention, the lie still persists. It is conveniently forgotten that the feeling of nationalism in European countries, too, is not very old, and that, in fact, a high class Norman nobleman in England in the twelfth or even in the thirteenth century would not have felt any pride in being called an "Englishman." In the the new World Order which will be established at the end of the present war it is very doubtful if the present nationalities will survive; it is certain that ideas of Federation and Internationalism will play havoc with the present narrow crude nationalism which has brought about the destruction of so many millions of human beings.

Now, India has, by reason of its geography, culture and traditions, a unity which nothing can take away. Even such a biased writer as Vincent Smith who affirms (in spite of his knowledge of Indian Emperors in historical times like Asoka, Samudragupta, Harsha and Akbar, who ruled over nearly all India) that "the complete political unity of India under the control of a paramount power, wielding unquestioned authority, is a thing of yesterday, barely a century old," *has* to admit that, "India, encircled as she is by seas and mountains, is indisputably a geographical unit, and, as such, is rightly designated by one name. Her type of civilization, too, has many features which differentiate it from that of all other regions of the world, while they are common to the whole country, or rather continent, in a degree sufficient to justify its treatment as a unit in the history of human, social, and intellectual development."

Mrs. Annie Besant after stating that the unity of India "has always been religious and cultural, and not political," says: "This religious and cultural Unity, after existing for over sixteen hundred centuries, was broken though but slightly, in the eighth century A. D. by the incursion into Sindh of Arabs from Bassorah, who had conquered Baluchistan, crossed the Indus and had settled down in Sindh.....The Theocracy of the Musalmans caused a rift in the religious and cultural Unity of India, but Islam had added much to her Art and Science, and we will hope for a future synthesis of hitherto seemingly incompatible elements." The present cry for *Pakistan*, raised by a large body of Muslims in India, which aims at dividing India into Muslim Zones and Hindu Zones, is simply a political war-cry raised for the purpose of getting for the Muslim minority a power and weightage out of all proportion to its numbers. In a Free India there could not



be many *istans*, there would be only one istan, that Hindustan or India, the common Pakistan or Holy la of the Hindus, the Muslims and the followers of all the faiths current in this country. Nature has arranged that on three sides the waters of the ocean should wash the sacred shores of India, while on the remaining side the high mountains in the world—the Himalayas—are an effective barrier between India and other countries. The peninsula of India is designed by Nature to be a Unit, and he who would deny unity to India has only to cast a cursory glance at the map.

Mr. Rama Shankar Prasad has made some pertinent remarks in this connection in his book entitled *India* published in 1936 :—

"It has often been remarked that India is a continent and not a country, meaning thereby that the geographical extent of her territories is great and the people inhabiting it belong to different races, following different religions, and speaking different languages. There is no denying this fact and we further observe that there are great differences even in the modes of life of the people of different parts of this vast country. Nevertheless, the student of culture and civilization very easily finds, in spite of the superficial differences that first attract the eye, that India as a whole possesses one culture and one civilization. This unity has remained unbroken throughout the long ages of her history. It has been a marked characteristic of her culture that she has been able to assimilate the various types of culture which were introduced into the country from time to time by foreigners coming into, inhabiting or even conquering, its territories.

"The central feature of this civilization is Aryan around which other forms have been associated according to their proper places. This Aryan element in her civili-

zation has always been and still is the most predominating factor in the development of her culture. The social institutions which the Aryans established in the very beginning have continued in essence even upto the modern times and have only been modified from time to time as necessity has arisen.....

"From almost the very beginning of civilized history India as a whole has been feeling one, and her people, even the masses, have been conscious of this unity. Even in their day-to-day life they recite verses, when performing ordinary religious rites, which make them constantly conscious that the whole of India has been regarded as one and its various cities and rivers should be looked upon by all as forming links in a chain. Again, the Indian pilgrims who want to visit the holy places have to go from one corner of the country to another and from province to province to complete their journey, and this has been going on since long before the inventions of railways which facilitated the work of passengers.... In this connection, it is also worthy of note that as far as the life beneath the surface is concerned, it is the same or similar in all parts of the country and despite differences of language and even of religion the common features are predominantly great and many. This may be most easily observed in common popular songs, food, clothing, household articles and religious, ethical or political teaching of the common people."

The little book, *Nationalism in Hindu Culture*, embodying lectures delivered by Professor Radha Kumud Mookerji, shows that Indian Patriotic Feeling. Hindu literature and sacred books are full of patriotic and national feeling. The Hindu believes with fervour that "Janani Janma-bhumischa Swargadapi Gariyasi: 'The Mother and

Motherland are higher than heaven itself." The great lawgiver, Manu, speaks of India as *Brahmavarta* or as "the land created by the gods", while the *Vishnupurana*, a sacred text, states that even the gods desire that when the needs must come down to the earth in a human body they should be "blessed with the good fortune of renewing their corporal confinement in *Bharatvarsha*", to quote the words of Professor Mookerji. Only such souls as have accumulated spiritual merit through a thousand lives are lucky to be born in India. Men born in the holy land of India have definitely a greater chance of Salvation than those born in other lands for this is "the land which affords the most congenial environment for the practice of spiritual meditations leading to unlimited self-development."

The institution of pilgrimage and monuments or relic-worship which makes the Indian masses go from one end of the country to another to visit sacred places is a most efficacious means of furthering aesthetic and patriotic sentiments. "The Hindu's pilgrimages are always to the glacier-clad mountains, the palm-clad sea-shore, or ocean isle, or the almost impenetrable depths of hill and wood", and these places of pilgrimage are so situated that the pilgrim has necessarily to cross the whole country from the north to the south, and from the west to the east, to pay his devotion at the holy shrines or places where there are sacred relics and monuments. This institution "is one of the most efficient agencies of popular education and political progress by means of which the mind of the masses, the unlettered millions of India, is automatically emancipated from the limitations of a narrow, provincial, parochial outlook to which it is naturally subjected. It extends the geographical consciousness of the people, the basis of all political progress, by which they are enabled to realise what is their true home, the home of

homes, the existence of a common country which they have to love and serve, the physical form of the fatherland claiming their homage."

A familiar argument against the *unity* of India is that there are many diversities of caste, creed, language and customs in India, and that there is no homogeneity. A writer in the *Modern Review* ("N") many years ago pointed out that the surface-diversities in Indian life were so many proofs of unity. "As in one of the higher organisms, no limb is a mere repetition of any other, but the whole is served in some special way by each, so here also, no one province duplicates or rivals the functions of any other. The Maharatta serves the Bengali and the Bengali the Maharatta, the Hindu and the Mohammedan find themselves complementary to one another, and the Punjabee and the Madrasí are both equally essential to the whole, in virtue of their mutual unlikeness, not their resemblances. It is by our unlikeness,—an unlikeness tempered, of course by deep sympathy—that we serve one another, not by our similarities.....In humanity, not even two hands or two feet are exactly identical. With regard to nations, the requisites of unity are common place and common circumstances. A people who are one in home and one in interest have no absolute need to speak a common language, or believe a common *mythos* in order to realise their mutual cohesion."

That there are certain heterogeneous elements in India cannot be denied, but these cannot come in the way of *unity* or *national feeling*. If it were otherwise, a country like Great Britain, or Japan, and, above all, the United States of America, could never have become one nation or one country. Just before the American War of Independence it seemed impossible that the colonies now forming the United States of America could become a nation.

"Great bodies of Dutch, Germans, French, Swedes, Scotch and Irish, scattered among the descendants of the English, contributed to the heterogeneous character of the colonies ; and they comprised so many varieties of government, religious belief, commercial interest and social type that their union appeared to many incredible on the very eve of the Revolution" (Lecky). A contemporary writer Burnaby, said then : "Fire and water are not more heterogeneous than the different colonies in North America. Nothing can exceed the jealousy and emulation which they possess in regard to one another. The inhabitants of Pennsylvania and New York have an inexhaustible source of animosity in their jealousy of the trade of the Jerseys.....In short, such is the difference of character, of manners, of religion, of interest of the different colonies that I think, if I am not wholly ignorant of the human mind, were they left to themselves, there would soon be a civil war from one end of the continent to the other, while the Indians and Negroes would, with better reason, impatiently watch the opportunity of exterminating them altogether." Another contemporary, Otis, wrote : "Were these colonies left to themselves, to-morrow America would be a mere shamble of blood and confusion before little petty states could be settled". (Quoted in *Towards Home Rule*, by Ramananda Chatterjee).

If such warring and discordant elements could be welded into a unity, nay powerful unity, why should any one think or hope of India other than as one country, and one nation ? Nature never designed any other country so completely a unit as India, and no amount of superficial diversities or harmful propaganda can take away what Nature has bestowed on India.

## CHAPTER 3.

## INDIA'S HEROIC ROLE.

A very common misconception about India is that she has had a not very glorious role to play in the history of the world. The histories of India now taught in schools and colleges, and even some of the very best books written about India, begin with the Aryan invasion of India (in what is called the Vedic period, which is placed arbitrarily at two thousand years before the Christian era), and the cruelties perpetrated by the Aryans on the original inhabitants of India. The subsequent history of India is treated as a continuation of foreign invasions and conquests—down to the British period—and the impression left on the mind of the reader of Indian history is that India has practically all along been a land of slaves and serfs whose destiny has been to accept with meekness and submission the rule, tyrannical or benevolent, of alien conquerors. It is sought to be made out that *Freedom, Adventure, Colonization, Democracy*...which are claimed by other nations to be their glorious characteristics and achievements have never been known to Indians. It is no wonder then that the conclusion is finally pressed home to Indians and foreigners alike that India can never be fit for self-government, especially of the democratic type.

It is not only ignorance but wishful thinking of a peculiarly disagreeable kind which should be held responsible for this wholesale falsification of the heroic role India has played in the history of the world.

In the nineteenth century the pious readers of the Bible came to the conclusion that the world (or at least the first man) came into being somewhere about 4004 B.C.,

and that civilization took its rise in the Biblical regions and the country around the big lake called the Mediterranean Sea. They assumed that Egypt, and parts of Asia Minor were civilised long before other countries. Whenever they found anything common between the names, customs, literature or traditions of countries farther East and these regions of the Mediterranean, they took it for granted that those other lands must have been either colonized by the Mediterranean people, or else must have borrowed from the Mediterranean pioneers of civilization.

Acting on this plan, the nineteenth century European writers and historians put the date of the beginning of the Indian civilization long after that of the Egyptian civilization or the civilization of Sumer and Babylon, and quietly derived the arts, crafts, and literature of India from other lands. The Indian writers, apt pupils of their European preceptors, followed suit. One such writer was Mr. Romesh Chander Dutt, a gifted Indian, who has written a history of *Civilisation in Ancient India*, and who, patriot as he was could not honestly claim for the Indian Vedas a higher antiquity than 2000 B. C.

Mr. Dutt could not foresee that another gifted Bengali would give a death blow to the theories about the dates of Indian Civilisation by his epoch-making discoveries of the mounds now known all over the world as Mohen-Jo-Daro excavations. Mr. R. D. Bannerji, followed by Sir John Marshall and other archaeologists, brought to light ruins of an Indian Civilisation the most ancient known to history. The full effect of these discoveries has not yet been felt as these ruins have not yet given out all their secrets. But whatever has been deciphered or discovered has made it amply clear that in such arts as architecture, painting, sculpture, pottery, sanitation, town-planning .....the inhabitants of Sind were highly

advanced at the earliest date that can be given for the Mediterranean civilisations.

Very curiously, however, the old misconceptions still survive, for it is taken for granted that an absurd theory, the Mohen-Jo-Daro civilisation Indians were not of Aryan stock at all but belonged to the Dravidian or some other races. So we are again faced with the assumption—a gratuitous assumption—that *the history of India is a history of foreign conquests*.

The date of the Aryan conquest of India is placed at a later date than the Mohen-Jo-daro civilisation, and the Vedas, accepted as eternal by the Hindus, are 'made out' to be of a later date than the Sindhis who had attained to the high degree of civilisation known to us through the excavations at Mohen-Jo-Daro! The pre-Aryan inhabitants of the Indus Valley are said to have been driven southwards, becoming the progenitors of the Dravidians found in the Madras Presidency. The Sudras, or the lowest caste in Hindus, are according to this theory descendants of the non-Aryans whom the Aryans conquered and then made slaves.

Swami Vivekananda has referred to this absurd theory in his lecture on "The Future of India." The Swami says: "There is a theory that there was a race of mankind in Southern India called Dravidians entirely differing from another race in Northern India called the Aryans, and that the Southern India Brahmans are the only Aryans that came from the North, the other men of Southern India belong to an entirely different caste and race from those of Southern India Brahmans.....Do not believe in such silly things.....The whole of India is Aryan, nothing else. Then there is the other idea that the Sudra caste are surely the aborigines. What are they? They are slaves. They say history repeats itself."



Americans, English, Dutch and the Portuguese go hold of the poor Africans, and made them work hard while they lived, and their children of mixed birth were born in slavery and kept in that condition for a long period. From that wonderful example, the mind jumps back several thousand years and fancies that the same thing happened here, and our archaeologists dream of India being full of dark-eyed aborigines, and the bright Aryan come from—the Lord knows where. According to some, they came from Central Thibet, others will have it that they came from Central Asia. There are patriotic Englishmen who think the Aryans were all red haired. Others, according to their idea, think that they were all black-haired. Of late, there was an attempt made to prove that the Aryans lived on the Swiss lakes. I should not be sorry if they all had been drowned there and all. Some say that they lived at the North Pole. Lord bless the Aryans and their habitations! As for the truth of these theories, there is not one word in our Scriptures, not one, to prove that the Aryans ever came from anywhere outside of India, and in ancient India was included Afghanistan. There it ends. And the theory that the Sudra caste were all non-Aryans and they were a multitude, is equally illogical and equally irrational. It could not have been possible in those days that a few Aryans settled and lived there with a hundred thousand slaves at their command. The slaves would have eaten them up, made 'chutney' of them in five minutes. The only explanation is to be found in the Mahabharata, which says, that in the beginning of the Satya Yuga there was one caste, the Brahmans, and then by difference of occupation they went on dividing themselves into different castes, and that is the only true and rational explanation that has been given."

The British historians have really been proceeding on

the analogy of their own country. The history of Britain, from the time she came within the orbit of civilization until so late as 1066 A. D., is that of conquests by foreigners, and her period of glory at home or abroad covers hardly four centuries. It is hardly possible then for the Britishers to imagine that there could be a country whose civilization simply cannot be dated and whose period of degradation or rule by foreigners coincides strangely enough with the period of the growth of civilization and freedom in the homeland of the Britons.

To understand rightly the role played by India in the history of the world it is necessary to realise that with the exception of a few sporadic frontier incursions, or invasion India was a country of freemen or self-governing people for untold centuries until the Muslims conquered Northern India eight or nine centuries ago. The Muslim conquest of India was no isolated instance of its kind, for the great part of Europe and Asia came likewise under the domination of the Muslim conquerors, about the same time. The invasion of India by Alexander the Great in the fourth century before the Christian era has been magnified by European historians out of all proportion. They conveniently forget to stress the fact that only a few years after the temporary success of Alexander in the Punjab, Indian Emperor (Chandragupta) defeated the army of Greeks, and got from the successor of Alexander a daughter, a Greek princess, in marriage, and a large territory as well, as the prize of his victory. The conquest of India by foreigners in the pre-Muslim days is a myth which has been built a fanciful and pathetic structure.

Another myth that must be exploded is that of India being a stay-at-home people, as Indian Colonization. to adventure and enterprise, and content to learn from the nations far

west. It is proved now beyond doubt that the ancient Indians were great sailors and colonizers. Rawlinson admits in his *Intercourse between India and the Western World*: "Indians appear in those days to have been experienced sailors. Early Indian literature contains abundant references to ships and sea-faring and bears testimony to the skill and daring of Hindu mariners in remote times. There are many allusions in the *Rig Veda* to voyages by sea. In the longest of these passages, we hear of voyages to distant islands, and galleys with a hundred oars. Evidently from early days the Indian seamen built ships larger than those usually employed even at a much later date in the Mediterranean. In the story of the invasion of Ceylon probably in the sixth century B. C., by the Bengal Prince Vijaya and his followers, we hear of a ship large enough to hold over seven hundred people. This may be an exaggeration, but references to ships holding three, five, and even seven hundred people are to be found in the *Jataka* stories. Indeed, Buddhist literature in particular abounds in allusions to sea voyages, and we gather that traders visited Babylon, Ceylon, and the Golden Chersonese (*Suvarna-bhumi*).....The exports in which they dealt were various kinds of birds and beasts, including, curiously enough, the valuable Sind horses, ivory, cotton goods, jewels, gold, and silver. Emigration was not uncommon". Rawlinson falls into the usual mistake of making India borrow from the Mediterranean countries almost everything—except, of course, the raw materials which patently must have been exported from India to the Mediterranean regions and vice-versa (rice, ivory, aloes, cinnamon, sugar, pepper.. and the fine cloth whose name in all the then languages (*Sindon*) would be sufficient to show that it was produced in Sind or Ind and not in Babylon ! He reaches the height of absurdity when he traces the origin of a story about

Buddha to a Babylonian original, and the myth of the Fish Incarnation of Vishnu to the Babylonian stories of the Flood.

The fact is that India is the parent land of the countries which are famous for their civilizations of antiquity. Egypt, Assyria, Greece.....derived their civilizations from India, *because they were countries colonised by the Indians*. Java, and other islands and countries in the Far East preserve, still, indications of having once been a part of Greater India. A recent publication by Chamanlal has conclusively shown that the monuments of ancient civilizations in America found in countries like Mexico and Peru show so much affinity with the customs, religion, and legends of ancient India that one is inevitably forced to the conclusion that Indians had emigrated to America and colonised it several thousands of years before Columbus was born.

Har Bilas Sarda, author of *Hindu Superiority*, has cited numerous authorities to prove that Egypt, Ethiopia, Persia, Asia Minor, Greece, Rome, Germany, Scandinavia, nay, ancient Britain itself, Japan, the Far East, and America were civilized by emigrants from India. Here are a few of these citations :—

"The ancient map of Persia, Colchis, and Armenia is absolutely full of the most distinct and startling evidences of Indian colonization, and, what is more astonishing, practically evinces, in the most powerful manner, the truth of several main points in the two great Indian poems, the Ramayana and Mahabharata. The whole map is positively nothing less than a journal of emigration on the most gigantic scale."

"The Chaldeans, the Babylonians and the inhabitants of Colchis derived their civilization from India."

"The great Heroes of India are the gods of Greece. They are in fact—as they have been often rationally af-

firmed, and as plausibly but not as rationally denied deified chiefs and heroes; and this same process of deification, both among Greeks and Romans—the *descendants of colonists from India*, continued, specially amongst latter people down to and throughout the most historical periods."

"The Samoyedes and Tchoudes of Siberia and Finle are really Samayndas and Joudes of India. The language of the two former races are said to have a strong affinity and are classed as] Hindu-Germanic by Klaproth, author of—'Asia Polyglotta'."

"We can scarcely question the derivation of Edda (the religious books of ancient Scandinavia) from the Vedas."

"The Druids (priests in ancient Britain) were the priests of the Hindu colonists who emigrated from India and settled in Britain."

"The Buddhist temples of Southern India, and of islands of the Indian Archipelago, as described to us by the learned members of the Asiatic Society and the numerous writers on the religion and antiquities of the Hind, correspond with great exactness in all their essentials and in many of their minor features with those of Central America."

The important difference between the emigrants from India and the colonists in recent times is that the Indians always recognised "the title of their rivals to exist, not merely as enemies but as collaborators in the building of a civilization which we may call to-day as much Aryan as non-Aryan." Even before Buddha the teacher of Ahinsa, his countrymen had realised that "live and let live" should be the motto of a great civilising nation. Very different from the narrow nationalists of these days who are simply selfish exploiters of weaker nations, and imperialists of the crudest kind,

Indians of antiquity adopted the "open door" policy in their own country and that of peace and friendliness in the hands of aliens. Indians colonised and civilised other lands not by sword and fire, or by the more dreadful and devastating weapons of economic infiltration and bondage, but by love and brotherliness. India conquered the world as a Teacher of spiritual truths and not as a shedder of blood and as a slave driver.

At the end of his pamphlet on *Greater India*, Dr. Kalidas Nag, after describing the colonies of Indians in the Far East, says: "Thus listening to these profound hymns of the Polynesian Vedas amidst the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean, we seem to catch the real secret of India's success in her career of internationalism. In spite of occasional lapses to militarism on the part of individual sovereigns, the *Indian people as a whole stuck substantially to the principle of Peace and Progress*. They respected the individuality of the races and nations which came into contact with them, offering their best and evoking the best in others. Thus India managed to leave a record of collaboration in the realm of the Sublime and the Beautiful, quite remarkable in world history. The political conquerors and economic exploiters might have been there too; but they never played a dominant role in this grand drama of creative unity. That is why, when the names of the great kings and emperors were forgotten, the people of these cultural colonies cherished with gratitude the memory of the services rendered by the innumerable Indian monks and teachers, artists and philanthropists—selfless workers for human progress and international amity."

A third myth about India which has gained ground is that India has not known self governing institutions, especially of the democratic type. As a matter of fact,

Self Governing  
Institutions in India

the *panchayat* system by which village administration has been carried on in India by the chosen representatives of the people is of far greater antiquity and usefulness than any system evolved in Europe and America. Sir Sankar Nair contributed an article to the *Modern Review* (Mar 1914) wherein he quoted in extenso the rules for election for one of those village assemblies (as promulgated in A. 918-919 and 920-921) which are very comprehensive and exhaustive. "Ladies were eligible for election and a lady was a member of a committee of justice." At the end of his article, Sir Sankaran Nair put this pertinent question: "After this who can say that representative institutions and self-government are a foreign importation?"

The historian of Buddhist India (Rhys Davids) says that the administrative and judicial business of the clan in which Buddha was born "was carried out in public assembly at which young and old were alike present, in their common Mote Hall (*Santhagara*) at Kapilavastu. It was at such a parliament or palaver, that King Pasenadi's proposition was discussed. When Ambattha goes to Kapilavastu on business, he goes to the Mote Hall where the Sakiyas were then in session. And it is to the Mote Hall of the Mallas that Ananda goes to announce the death of Buddha, they being then in session there to consider that very matter."

The historian of *The Early History of India* (Vincent Smith) writes: "The Punjab, Eastern Rajputana, and Malwa for the most part were in possession of tribes or clans living under republican institutions." Dr. Hoernle, President of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, has pointed out that "Mahavira, the founder of Jainism was born in a State which was an oligarchic republic."

In his small book on *Corporate Life in Ancient India* Mr. R.C. Majumdar has shown that democracy in politics and in business organisations was a familiar feature of

Indian life. For instance, he says of the trade guilds: "In spite of this high exercise of authority by the Executive Officers the democratic element was a quite distinguishing feature of the guild organisations of this period. There was a house of assembly where the members of the guild assembled to transact public business from time to time. According to Narada, regular rules were laid down for the attendance of members, and the King had to approve of them, whatever they might be.....Regular speeches seem to have been made in the assembly, and the idea of 'liberty of speech' was probably not unknown."

It is only after the British rule in India that the village *panchayats* or self-governing assemblies have lost their vogue and power.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE INDIAN WAY OF LIFE I.

The Indian way of life is based on one fundamental conviction that *all life is one*, that the Atman or the soul is to be found in the meanest creature as in the most evolved living being. "In every man and in every animal, however weak or wicked, great or small, resides the same omnipresent, omniscient soul. The difference is not in the soul, but in the manifestation. Between me and the smallest animal, the difference is only in manifestation, but as a principle he is the same as I am, he is my brother, he has the same soul as I have. This is the greatest principle that India has preached. The talk of the brotherhood of man becomes in India the brotherhood of universal life, of animals, and of all life down to the little ants,—all these are our bodies. Even as our Scripture says, 'Thus the sage, knowing that the same Lord inhabits all bodies, will wor-

Al life is one:  
the Atman or soul  
is manifestation  
of God.



ship every body as such." That is why in India there have been such merciful ideas about the poor, about animals about everybody and everything else. This is one of the common grounds about our ideas of the soul." (Swami Vivekananda).

According to the Indian, "the Atman or soul inhabits

The goal of life:  
Freedom or eternal  
Bliss.

body after body until there is no more interest for it to continue to do so." The goal of life, therefore, is not enjoyment nor attainment of Paradise or Heaven.

but liberation from this round of births and deaths. To quote Swami Vivekananda again ; "We also have heavens and hells too, but these are not infinite for in the very nature of things they cannot be. If there were any heavens they would be only repetition of this world of ours on a bigger scale, with a little more happiness, and a little more enjoyment, but that is all the worse for the soul. There are many of these heavens. Persons who do good work here with the thought of reward, when they die, are born again as gods in one of these heavens as Indra and others. ....It is a position ; one soul becomes high and takes the Indra position, and remains in it only a certain time ; he then dies and is born again as man. But the human body is the highest of all. Some of the gods may try to go higher and give up all ideas of enjoyment in heavens, but as in this world, wealth and position and enjoyment delude the vast majority, so do most of the gods become deluded also, and after working out their good Karma, they fall down and become human beings again. This earth therefore, is the Karma Bhumi ; it is this earth from which we attain to liberation ; so, even these heavens are not worth attaining to. What is the worth having ? Mukti, freedom. Even in the highest of heavens, says our Scripture, you are a slave ; what matters it if you are king for twenty thousand years ? So long as you have

body, so long as you are a slave to happiness, so long as time works on you, space works on you, you are a slave. The idea, therefore, is to be free of external and internal nature. Nature must fall at your feet, and you must trample on it, and be free and glorious, by going beyond. No more is there life, therefore no more is there death; no more enjoyment, therefore, no more misery. It is bliss unspeakable, indestructible, beyond everything. What we call happiness and good here, are but particles of that eternal Bliss. And this eternal Bliss is our goal."

The life lived by man on this earth must be a life of sacrifice or *yajna*. It must be a dedicated life a sacrifice. life. And it must be a life of renunciation, detachment and purity like that of the lotus which lying in a pool of water is not wetted or defiled. The Indian makes no difference between morality and religion. Morality is a part of religion. The first requisite of this morality is *purity*, for the attainment of which a whole system of rituals has been established, and taboos promulgated.

The Hindus burn sacrificial fires (*Havans*) and have fasts, festivals and religious observances galore, and rarely is a Hindu permitted to forget the fact that this earthly existence is only meant for the final liberation of the Atman when it will be united to the Oversoul, the Paramatman (the Supreme Being). The Muslims in India, besides their traditional fasts and feasts, e. g. the Ramzan observance, and the Idds which their religion prescribes, also sometime practise renunciation and sacrificial rites even as the Hindus. "Ascetics among Muslims are occasionally found who observe tonsure and smearing of the body with ashes, as among Hindus. They are also found as the guardians of sacred shrines which are worshipped by both Hindus and Mohammadans as in the case of Sakhi Sarwar, in the Punjab. The sacred fire is also found. At the shrine

of Sadiq Nihang, in the Jhang district, in the Punjab, the Muslim *faqirs* keep a fire going night and day, called *dhuni*" (Titus : *Indian Islam*.)

In the chapter entitled "The Differentia" in Ramaswami Sastry's *Hindu Culture* a fine attempt has been made to set forth the specific character of ancient India or Hindu thought and feeling, as distinguished from the European : "It is the function of culture to lift life to noble uses, to something higher than itself, to lift to some level higher than animal satisfaction and race reproduction. It disciplines him through love of truth and beauty and goodness to a realisation of the essential nature as separate from mere physical being. Grecian culture perfected intellectual reason and sense of beautiful form ; Roman culture perfected law and order and political cohesion on the basis of law ; and modern European culture is perfecting scientific reason and democracy. Indian culture stressed the realisation of the infinite by self-dedicating devotion rising on the wings of discipline and dispassion to the lotus feet of God.

"The modern European mind has deified reason as the final arbiter of things. It wants reason to purify religion. But the Hindu mind deified spiritual realisation as the ultimate revealer of things. It wants religion to purify reason. The modern European mind has as its goal universal education, universal suffrage, and universal enjoyment. The Hindu mind has had as its goal universal peace, universal love, and universal bliss (the eternal bliss of God-love and God-realisation and not the fleeting bliss of terrestrial enjoyment). To the modern European mind philosophy is a thing apart from life, a mere synthesis of knowledge. To the Hindu mind it is of the stuff and essence of life and has always had practical daily consequences on life and thought. Alexander, Ceasar and

Napoleon are the acmes of practical life there ; Janaka, Rama and Yudhishtira are the acmes of practical life here. The West begins with the body and gropes towards the spirit ; India begins with the spirit and visions the place of the outer things in a comprehensive scheme of life. To the West the test of values is outside ; to India the test of values is inside.

"The Hindu culture has never fled away from the realities of life. It has always sought to see life steadily and see it whole. It has always made concessions to human weakness without compromising its ideals..... Nor does Hindu culture lead to any devitalisation as confidently asserted by our critics within and without. The best proof of the falseness of this statement is that it has lived, that it began to live before other cultures were born, and that it is destined to outlive them all. It proclaims a higher reality than the reality of this life, but seeks to rise on the tiptoe of expectant and inquiring knowledge and love to peer into the higher reality and does not seek to fly away from life on earth. Because this birth is conceived of as a wave in the ocean of births, does it lose its value on that account ?

"The Hindu culture proclaims not the suppression of desires but the satisfaction of legitimate desires leading up to desirelessness and dispassion. Man has to rise from the lower self through society and nature to God. Each higher self-dedication necessarily involves a contraction of the region of desire and an expansion of the realm of love. No one is asked to renounce in a hurry and to repent at leisure. Indeed there must be a training for the right renunciation and the right form and degree of renunciation and at the right time. It is the training for righteous and rational enjoyment that is the best training for perfect renunciation. In fact Hindu culture has met life and

time at all points, and hence it is that it has been able to live and live such an energetic and puissant life."

The foregoing remarks on Hindu culture will stand for Indian culture in general. There may be difference in matters of belief and creed and worship between the Hindu and the Muslim or the Christian and the Jew in India, but in point of ideals and culture all Indians are alike. All Indians lay the greatest stress on this that life should be lived as a dedication to God, to reach and realise whom is the end of this earthly existence. Life is a matter of obligations and duties to an Indian, and not an endless opportunity for enjoyment of rights, privileges, and comforts. To the Western mind poverty is a crime, but in India even the reigning potentate or the richest magnate will covet the title of a *fakir* or *dervish* i. e. a beggar, or one who has nothing to call his own. Renunciation, not enjoyment, is to the Indian the noblest thing.

The Indian way of life derives its inspiration from the preception of Oneness in the Many, and the quest after the Infinite. The Indian instinctively believes that one life runs through the entire Universe, even in the vegetable and mineral kingdoms, and, so, his constant aim is to reach the source, the fountain-head of this life. All Indian literature, and Indian art, testify to this realisation of the Oneness in the Universe, and the hunger and search for union with the Absolute, the Supreme Being. The following extracts from two of the Upanishads, sacred philosophical texts of the Hindus, set forth profound beliefs :—

As the spider casts out and draws in (its web), as from a living man the hairs of the head and body spring forth, so is produced the universe from the indestructible Spirit.

As from a blazing fire consubstantial sparks proceed in a thousand ways, so from the imperishable (Spirit)

various living souls are produced, and they return to him too.

As flowing rivers are resolved into the sea, losing their names and forms, so the wise, freed from name and form, pass into the divine Spirit, which is greater than the great. He who knows that supreme Spirit becomes Spirit.

(Mundaka Upanishad)

Whate'er exists within this universe  
Is all to be regarded as enveloped  
By the great Lord, as if wrapped in a vesture.  
Renounce, o man, the world, and covet not  
Another's wealth, so shalt thou save thy soul.  
Perform religious works, so may'st thou wish  
To live a hundred years; in this way only  
May'st thou engage in wordly acts, untainted.  
To worlds immersed in darkness, tenanted  
By evil spirits, shall they go at death  
Who in this life are killers of their souls.  
There is one only Being who exists  
Unmoved, yet moving swifter than the mind;  
Who far outstrips the senses, though as gods  
They strive to reach him; who himself at rest  
Transcends the fleetest flight of other beings;  
Who, like the air, supports all vital action.  
He moves, yet moves not; he is far, yet near;  
He is within this universe, and yet  
Outside this universe; who'er beholds  
All living creatures as in him, and him—  
The universal spirit—as in all,  
Henceforth regards no creature with contempt.  
The man who understands that every creature  
Exists in God alone, and thus perceives  
The unity of being, has no grief  
And no illusion. He, the all pervading,  
Is brilliant, without body, sinewless,

Invulnerable, pure, and undefiled  
 By taint of sin. He also is all-wise,  
 The Ruler of the mind, above all beings,  
 The self-existent. He created all things  
 Just as they are from all eternity.

(Isa Upanishad)

With such ideas uppermost in his mind, the Indian is the very opposite of a *fanatic*. Goethe says, "Many paths lead to God." by political considerations and the freedom of the moment, Indians may have occasionally fallen victims to religious fanaticism and sectarianism, but that is not their natural habit or tendency. If there is one thing that the Hindu believes it is this "that truth wears vestures of many colours and speaks in strange tongues," that there are many paths leading to God. The Hindu repeats the text: *Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti*: He is one; the sages describe him in various ways. "Hinduism does not distinguish ideas of God as true and false, adopting one particular idea as the standard for the whole human race. It accepts the obvious fact that mankind seeks its goal of God on various levels and in various directions, and feels sympathy with every stage of search. The same God presses itself at one stage as power, at another as personality, at a third as all-comprehensive spirit, just as the same forces which put forth the green leaves also cause the crimson flowers to grow. We do not say that the crimson flowers are all the truth and the green leaves are all false. Hinduism accepts all religious notions as facts and arranges them in the order of their more or less intrinsic significance. The bewildering polytheism of the masses and the uncompromising monotheism of the classes are both the Hindu the expressions of one and the same force on different levels." (Radhakrishnan). The enlightened Muslims in India believe that God has sent prophets

all people and all lands. "They maintain that Islam is not only the most rational religion, but it is the universal religion that was proclaimed by all the prophets of mankind, and, as such, is offered to all men everywhere. In fact, the belief is often expressed that, in accordance with the Quranic text, all nations have had their and have been given divine revelations in sacred books; and on this assumption, it is not considered improper to speak of the Hindu incarnations Ram and Krishna, as among the prophets, and to pray for God's peace upon them when mentioning them". (Titus).

All the faiths that have originated in India concur in this, that religion is not a *creed*, but *realization* (of God), and that what matters is *conduct*, not *belief*.

The Hindu believes in the *Law of Karma*, viz., that, there is the rule of law in the Universe: as you sow so you reap. What we are in this life we are what we have become by the actions we have done in our previous births. And we are every moment making our characters and shaping our destinies. "There is no loss of any activity which we commence nor is there any obstacle to its fulfilment. Even a little good that we may do will protect us against great odds. What we have set our hearts on will not perish with this body. This fact inspires life with the present sense of eternity". "The cards in the game of life are given to us. We do not select them. They are traced to our past karma, but we can call as we please, lead what suit we will, and as we play, we gain or lose. And there is freedom."

The recognition of the Law of Karma is a recognition of the justice of God. It tells us that "every act, every thought is weighed in the invisible but universal balance scales of justice. The day of judgment is not in some remote



future, but here and now, and none can escape it. Div laws cannot be evaded. They are not so much imposed from without as wrought into our natures. Sin is not much a defiance of God as a denial of soul, not so much a violation of law as a betrayal of self. We carry with the whole of our past. It is an ineffaceable record which time cannot blur nor death erase". (Radhakrishnan).

Non-Hindus in India do not generally believe in the theory of Reincarnation or the Law of Karma, but the Indian way of life is so thoroughly *spiritual* that in actual conduct the result is very much the same. No Indian can get rid of the feeling that nothing can save him from the effect of his actions, except of course the mercy of God and that mercy too is to be obtained by sincere repentance and resolve to reform—right *actions*, which according to the Law of Karma must exert their full effect like any other acts.

The Indian way of life, thus, is based on the all-important truth that all life is One, and that the supreme goal of our existence is to be united to or realise or be merged in the Absolute, the Supreme Being. Not by what we amass or snatch or conquer shall we get nearer to salvation but by what we give up or renounce. We are conditioned in this life by our past Karma but we are free to make or mar our future by what we do now. There are many paths that lead to God; what is wanted is the spiritual urge so that spiritual life be quickened. What one's belief or creed is does not matter, even if it be patently wrong, for "error is only a sign of immaturity."

## CHAPTER 5.

### THE INDIAN WAY OF LIFE II.

At the root of the character of the Indian people are those two grand principles: (1) all life is one, and (2) the Law of Karma cannot be evaded.

not be thwarted. The effect of the perception of these truths is that there is no nation in the world so gentle, so forgiving, so averse to killing and injuring, so careful of the rights of the living and the dead, as the Indians. Certain sects of Indians will prefer to lose their lives rather than take the life of a noxious insect, or a poisonous reptile. In Europe, a saint here and there, some Francis of Assisi, will make friends with birds and beasts, but in India the man in the street feels kinship with all the creation and cherishes and takes care of helpless creatures.

India's grand contribution to the world, in the realm of practical morals, is the lesson of *Ahimsa* or Non violence. The Western follower of Christ is puzzled to discover that his Master wanted him to turn the other cheek to the man who smote him on one cheek. He cannot understand the meaning or virtue of such an injunction ; non-violence appears to him something silly, if not worse. But to the Indian, *Ahimsa* is the "basis of religion," to use the words of Mahatma Gandhi, the great reviver of this doctrine in our own times. Long before Christ, Indians had preached this lesson to the world ; the followers of Buddha had carried it far and wide, even to the farthest confines of the civilised world. The Indian ideal of a glorious life has been fairly expressed by Shelley in his character of Prometheus. The tyrant Jupiter might chain up Prometheus and inflict a thousand tortures on him. But Prometheus will not even hate his enemy. He will practise *Ahimsa* and love, and if in a moment of weakness he has cursed or hated his enemy, he will repent of it.

The Hindus, as a race, are averse to flesh-eating, and even the Muslims in India and the followers of Christianity and other religions do not gorge themselves with the carcasses of animals so plentifully as men in other lands. There is one animal

whose flesh is strictly taboo to the Hindu: the Cow. ( of the most puzzling things to a foreigner is the sentiment the Hindus have for the Mother Cow. It is not uncommon for a Hindu to sacrifice his life to prevent the slaughter of cows, and of all the causes which bring about communal riots in India the most common or prolific is that of cow slaughter. In an agricultural country like India the cow is easily the most precious and useful animal, and the devotion of the Hindu to the cow surpasses mention. The cow dung and cow urine are held by the Hindu to be purifying substances; the experience of agriculture has taught him their prophylactic properties. The Muslim considers the flesh of the hog or pig to be unclean, and takes umbrage at the slaughter of this animal. The influence of the British has brought about powerful changes in the domestic habits of the Indians, but it has not made the Hindus partake of beef, or the Muslim partake of pork. Indeed, between the Britisher in India and the Indian, there is an unbridgeable gulf because the former cannot forego either beef or pork. In his heart and hearts the average Indian considers the Western man and woman to be unclean because of their diet. If the foreigner in India were to give up taking beef and pork he would come nearer to the understanding of the Indian.

The daily routine of the Indian is that of *duties* to be performed, and obligations to be fulfilled  
 Dharma. —to the living as well as to the dead.

In this the Indians furnish a contrast to other nations whose watch-word of activity is Rights—right to live, right to fight, right to conquer, right to enjoy.....

The perception of spiritual truths and the consequent performance of duties and obligations are comprised in India in one magic word, untranslatable in non-Indian languages: *Dharma*. Some have translated *Dharma* as religion or law, but *Dharma* is not religion, nor law; it is

something above and beyond these. "In India Dharma has been a word to conjure with. It is the sole and supreme means leading to the sole and supreme end of God-love and God-realisation.....It is not mere external command; it is an internal law of being. It is not a mere injunction; it is a means of self expression. Hindu society is a framework designed for reincarnating souls of a certain attainment of purity to enable them to fulfil the soul's eternal quest for God; and Dharma is the law of its being, by obedience to which we can preserve the frame work for ever and achieve also individual salvation" (Sastry)

This *Dharma* prescribes four stages, in the life of a man or a woman. The first stage is that of *Brahmacharya*, the (celibate) stage of youth and adolescence when the greatest care must be taken to keep oneself pure and strong. This is the stage of training for life's work. In ancient India the Brahmacharis passed this time of their life in the forest ashrams or Universities with great gurus or Teachers who gave them appropriate training. Tagore's Ashram at Shantiniketan, and the great Gurukul at Hardwar founded by the late Swami Shradhanand, are instances of these forest Universities. The next stage is that of the *grahasthi* or householder. Normally every man and woman must marry when grown up. "India has known for centuries what Freud is popularising in Europe, that repressed desires are more corrupting in their effects than those exercised openly and freely.....He who runs back from marriage is in the same boat with one who runs away from battle. Only failures in life avoid occasions for virtue. Marriage is regarded as sacred. The very gods are married. When the Hindu descends from the adoration of the Absolute and takes to the worship of a

Four stages in the life of a man

Marriage essential for an Indian.

personal god, his god has always a consort. He does worship a bachelor or a virgin.....There is nothing wholesome or guilty about the sex life. Through institution of marriage it is made the basis of intellect and moral intimacies. Marriage is not so much a concession to human weakness as a means of spiritual growth. It is prescribed for the sake of the development of personality as well as the continuance of the family identity. Marriage has this social side. Every family is a partnership between the living and the dead. The Sradh ceremony is intended to impress the idea of the family solidarity on the members. At the end of the ceremony the performer asks, 'Let me, O fathers! have a hero: a son.'.....

Attitude to Woman. "Though we have had our share of exaggerating the wickedness of women, and though we have some texts which regard the woman as the eternal temptress of man Adam.....the general Hindu view of woman is exalted one. It regards the woman as the helpmate in all his work, *sahadharmini*. The Hindu believes in the speciality of the contribution which woman makes to the world. She has special responsibilities and special duties.....So long as children cannot be shaken from heaven, but have to be built within their mother's bodies, so long will there be a specific function for women. The bearing and rearing of children take a great deal of their time and attention, women were relieved of the economic responsibilities for the family. While man is expected to take to the worldly pursuits (*Yajnapradhanya*), woman is capable of great heights of self-control and self-denial (*tapahpradhanya*). The stricter code of morality applied to women is really a compliment to them, for it accepts the natural superiority of the women. But the modern woman, if I may say so, is losing her self-respect

She does not respect her own individuality and uniqueness, but is paying an unconscious tribute to man by trying to imitate him. She is fast becoming masculine and mechanical. Adventurous pursuits are leading her into conflict with her own inner nature" (Radhakrishnan: *The Hindu View of Life*.)

Perhaps there is nothing of which an Indian can be so proud as of the chastity, self-abnegation, and greatness of the Indian woman. It is well-known that Indian women cheerfully followed their husbands to the funeral pyre and burnt themselves alive; this institution of *sati* may have shocked the world but it was the supreme instance of purity and sacrifice known to the world. Orthodox Indian women would not even shake hands with men, so averse are they to have anyone other than their husbands touch their bodies. The fashionable westerner, with his balls and dances, and "necking" and "spooning" parties, and pre-nuptial intimacies and familiarities, cannot enter into the spirit of the Indian woman—who would die rather than go in for promiscuous kisses, embraces and caresses.

Under the influence of modernism the system of *Purdah* (which has obtained in several parts of India since the spread of Islam) is rapidly being abolished. Women are no longer secluded from the gaze of strangers, and they are taking an increasingly greater part in the social and political affairs of the country. In many schools and colleges women and men study together. But the Indian way of life, which discountenances levity between the sexes and frowns upon any physical contact or intimacy between a man and woman who are not married, has in nowise changed. A point that must be remembered by a foreigner in India is that no respectable Indian girl will "entertain" him in the way he has been accustomed to being "entertained" by women in other

lands, and if he finds an exception to the rule let him know at once that his entertaining partner has cut her moorings and got adrift from society. An Indian woman, be she Hindu or Muslim or Christian.....is by nature and habits averse to publicity and loose speech or loose conduct—without being a prude or a puritan.

The third stage of life is the *Vanaprastha* stage when men and women give up the responsibilities of married life and go to a retreat or a forest to meditate on God and things spiritual. "According to Manu (the Hindu

Meditation and Renunciation. Law-giver), one must enter the third stage when one becomes a grandfather, or one's skin begins to show wrinkles or one's hair turns grey." In these times it may not be practicable to go and live in a forest. But even in a city one can control one's passions and devote the evening of one's life to calmness and contemplation. There must come a time when one must get free from the hurly burly of life.

The fourth stage of life is that of *Sanyas*, complete freedom from the cares of the world. The sanyasi has no attachments whatever; the whole world is his home, and all men are brethren to him. He has to wander from place to place looking "upon all men and all groups as equal" and it is no shame to him to beg his bread from door to door. The Sanyasis "take on the wideness of the whole earth, dwell in love and walk in righteousness". Every body cannot be a liberated soul, a Sanyasi, but it is a stage of life which must be aimed at and encouraged.

It is to be noted that while every Indian pays instinctive reverence to the *Sanyasi*, the man of renunciation, sacrifice, and service, it is the *Grihasthi* or householder, who is regarded as the prop of society, and the most indispensable member of the community. The *Sanyasi* is a

sonk and as such he does not contribute to society materially nor does he care for its forms. The householder has to shoulder this social burden, and become a man of action. He has to support the men and women in the other three stages; great is his responsibility and great his privilege.

The Indian way of life has been condemned for one peculiar institution: the institution of Caste. This institution, in one way or the other, is common to all Indians, and is not confined to the Hindus only. The Muslims in India have their own caste system with the Sayyads or the descendants of the Prophet at the top, and even the Roman Catholic Christian has his caste system in which he remains, and within which he generally marries. The members of a caste follow the same profession or calling and generally do not dine with or intermarry with members of other castes. The caste system is a product of the *religiosity* of the Indian mind, and it is therefore that even the Muslims in India, though believers in religious democracy, practise caste in matters social. The author of "Indian Islam" writes: "In the social sphere the influence of Hinduism on Islam has nowhere left a more definite mark than in the creation of caste distinctions, which indicate social status as clearly as they do in Hindu society..... In fact, to such an extent does the Hindu idea of a fourfold social division prevail, that is the Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Sudra, that in some parts converts to Islam consider that they are bound to enrol themselves as either Sayyid, Shaykh, Mughul, or Pathan..... There is a wide range of caste names found in the second division of Muslims, such as *Julaka*, *Teli*, *Bhat*, *Jogis*, and the like. Most of them indicate occupations, as the *Teli*, who makes oil (tel). Most of them are just the old Hindu caste or guild names



carried over. Not only do caste names prevail, but many of the original caste prejudices as well in respect of eating, drinking and marriage."

The Hindu main castes are four out of which have developed innumerable subcastes: the *Brahmans* or the priestly caste whose function is to learn and to teach, to perform religious ceremonies and live a life of austerity and poverty, *Kshatriyas* or the warrior caste whose duty is to fight for freedom, order and discipline, the *Vaishyas* or the mercantile class who must attend to the daily needs of the people and keep the economic life of the community in order, and, lastly, the *Sudras* or the proletariat who must serve the other castes and do jobs necessary for the health, hygiene and sanitation of the country. The Brahman is the brain, the Kshatriya the brawn, the Vaishya the backbone, and the Sudra the feet of society. In the Golden Age, the Sat yuga, all men were Brahmans, and there was no need for men of inferior castes to exist at all. The epoch in which we live is the Kali yuga, the Iron Age, the last of the four yugas or epochs, and as the cycle will change and the time of Sat yuga will approach, all men will become Brahmans. That is the Hindu belief.

There are one or two things which must be borne in mind regarding this caste system. One is that the Hindu caste system is the best means so far devised by man for harmonising various races while preserving the purity of blood of the superior races. The Hindus did not *kill* or *enslave* men of inferior culture as other nations have done. They formed them into a caste and allowed them to develop their individuality within that caste. "In dealing with the problem of the conflict of the different racial groups, Hinduism adopted the only safe course of democracy, viz, that each racial group should be allowed to develop the best in it without impeding the progress of others." The Hindus put caste taboos of food, drink and

marriage with a sure knowledge of psychology, hygiene and eugenics. "The Hindu [thinkers, perhaps through a lucky intuition or an empirical generalisation, assumed the fact of heredity and encouraged marriages among those who are of approximately the same type and quality. If a member of first-class family marries another of poor antecedents the good inheritance of the one is debased by the bad inheritance of the other, with the result that the child starts life with a heavy handicap. If the parents are of about the same class the child would be practically the equal of the parents. Blood tells."

Foreign observers have paid tributes to the usefulness of the Indian caste system. One of them says: "There is no doubt that it is the main cause of the fundamental stability and contentment by which Indian society has been braced for centuries against the shocks of politics and the cataclysms of Nature. It provides every man with his place, his career, his occupation, his circle of friends. It makes him at the outset a member of a corporate body; it protects him through life from the canker of social jealousy and unfulfilled aspirations it ensures him companionship and a sense of community with others in like case with himself. The caste organization is to the Hindu his club, his trade union, his benefit society, his philanthropic society. There are no work-houses in India, and none are as yet needed. The obligation to provide for kinsfolk and friends in distress is universally acknowledged; nor can it be questioned that this is due to the recognition of the strength of family ties and of the bonds created by associations and common pursuits which is fostered by the caste principle. An India without caste, as things stand at present, it is not quite easy to imagine." (Sidney Low).

Swami Vivekananda points out that the apex of the Indian Caste system is reached in the Brahman, the man

of spirituality living in poverty and utmost simplicity. It is the aim of the other castes to reach the state of the Brahman. "In Europe, there is my Lord the Cardinal, who is struggling hard and spending thousands of pounds to prove the nobility of his ancestors and he will not be satisfied until he has traced his ancestry to some dreadful tyrant, who lived on a hill, and watched the people passing by, and whenever he had the opportunity, sprang out on them and robbed them.....In India, on the other hand, the greatest princes seek to trace their descent to some ancient sage, who dressed in a habit of loin-cloth, lived in a forest, eating roots, and studying the Vedas... . Our ideal of high birth, therefore, is different from that of others. Our ideal is the Brahman of spiritual culture and renunciation.....we read that in the Satya yuga there was only one caste, and that was the Brahman. We read in the Mahabharata that the whole world was in the beginning peopled with Brahmans and that as soon as they began to degenerate they become divided into different castes, and that when the cycle turns round they will all go back to the Brahmanical origin.....Therefore our solution of the caste question is not degrading those who are already high up, is not running amuck through food and drink, is not jumping out of our own limits in order to have more enjoyment, but it becomes every one of us.....becoming the ideal Brahman.....The command is the same to you all, that you must make progress without stopping, and that, from the highest man to the lowest pariah, every one in this country has to try and become the ideal Brahman."

Along with caste system go food regulations which  
 Food Regula-                      contrived for hygienic and spiritual ends  
 tions.                                have been stretched to such absurd  
    lengths as to provide material for  
 laughter as well as tears. Not only have we water (as

well as tea and food) for the Hindus separately and the Muslims separately at Railway stations and other places, but we have even a saying that in certain Hindu households seven brothers must have eight (one spare!) fire-places in the same house to cook their food separately.

The regulations about food are derived from the injunction in the Srutis, or the Vedic injunction: "when the Ahara is pure then the Sattva becomes pure; when the Sattva is pure the Smriti (the memory of the Lord) becomes truer, steadier, and absolute." Ramanuja said that Ahara meant food, and that there were three sorts of defects which made food impure. Shankaracharya said: that Ahara meant "thought collected in the mind;" when that became pure, the Sattva becomes pure, and not before that. You may eat what you like. If food alone would purify the Sattva then feed the monkey with milk and rice all its life; would it become a great Yogi? Then the cows and the deer would be great Yogis .... If by eating vegetables a man gets to heaven, the cows and the deer will get to heaven first." In this way does Swami Vivekananda demonstrate the absurdity of the Hindu food regulations: "religion has got into the kitchen."

And yet it is good for the health of the body and the spirit to desist from eating flesh meat, to eat clean things, and in a clean place and clean manner. The Indian method of having a separate clean plate for food and clean glass for water for every diner is a very hygienic regulation, and there is no doubt that the Indian food regulations have kept India free from many deadly scourges like the venereal diseases. The sight of several men drinking from the same glass is highly repugnant to Indian notions of clean living.

Colonel Olcott has defended the Hindu food regulations which keep every diner of high caste apart from his fellows. "When they sit down to eat, every man is

isolated from his neighbours at the feast; he sits in the centre of a square traced upon the floor, grandsire, father and son, brother and uncle, avoiding touching each other quite as scrupulously as though they were of different castes. If I should handle a Brahmin's brass platter, his *lotah* or other vessel for food and drink, neither he nor any of his caste would touch it, much less eat or drink of it until it had been passed through fire: if the utensil were of clay it must be broken. Why all these? That no affront is meant by avoidance of contact is shown in the careful isolation of members of the same family from each other. The explanation, I submit, is that every Brahmin was supposed to be an individual evolution of psychic force, apart from all consideration of family relationship: if one touched the other at his particular time when the vital force was actively centred upon the process of digestion, the psychic force was liable to be drawn off, as a leaden jar charged with electricity is discharged by touching it with your hand. The Brahmin of old was an initiate, and his evolved psychic power was employed in the *agnihotra* and other ceremonies. The case of the touching of the eating or drinking vessel, or the mat or clothing of a Brahmin by one of another caste of inferior psychic development, or the stepping of such a person upon the ground within a certain prescribed distance from the sacrificial spot, bear upon this question.....the aura of a Brahmin of the ancient times was purified and intensified by a peculiar course of religious training—let us say psychic training—and if it could be mixed with the aura of a less pure, less spiritualized person, its strength would of necessity be lessened, its quality adulterated." (quoted by Har Bilas Sarda).

Misunderstanding of the basis of the Indian caste

Untouchability : system has brought about the problem  
 the Depressed of Untouchability. The so-called lower  
 Classes. castes or depressed classes (who follow  
 pursuits considered to be menial or servile as that of  
 leather tanning, scavenging etc.) are looked down upon by  
 men of "superior" castes, and some of them are treated as  
 untouchables. No one has so zealously espoused the cause  
 of these untouchables as Mahatma Gandhi (who calls them  
 Harijans or "people of the Lord") but even he has to  
 admit that the Hindu religion does not sanction "untouc-  
 hability". Writing on "Backward and Untouchable  
 Classes" in a pamphlet on "India" issued by the American  
 Academy of Political and Social Science, Gandhiji  
 remarked : "Untouchability is perhaps the greatest evil  
 that has crept into Hinduism. The nearest approach to  
 it found in the West was the untouchability of the Jews  
 who were confined to the Ghettos. I do not know the  
 historical origin of this disease. Socially it seems to have  
 arisen from the desire of the so-called superior classes to  
 isolate themselves from those whom they regarded as  
 inferior. It is the execrescence of *varnashrama dharma*  
 which has been misrepresented as the caste-system with  
 which, as seen in the multitudinous castes of latter-day  
 Hinduism, the original divisions have very little to do.

"Untouchability in its mildest form takes the shape of  
 not touching or having any social intercourse with the  
 'untouchable'. In its extreme form it becomes unapproach-  
 ability and even invisibility. The approach of a man  
 within a defined distance or his very sight in some parts  
 of the extreme South pollutes the 'superior' classes. The  
 'unapproachables' and the 'invisible' are very few in  
 number, whereas the untouchables are roughly estimated  
 at sixty millions. In my own opinion this is a highly  
 exaggerated estimate.

"Though I regard myself as a staunch Hindu believing

and having great veneration for the *Vedas* and the other Hindu religious books, and though I claim, not as a scholar but as a religiously minded man, to have made a serious attempt to understand the Hindu scriptures, I can discover no warrant for this brutal doctrine of untouchability in it. Save for a few texts of doubtful authority in the *Smritis*, the whole doctrine of 'untouchability' is utterly repugnant to the spirit of Hinduism whose glory consists in proclaiming non-violence to be the basis of religion and which lays down the bold formula that all life, including the meanest crawling beings, is *One*".

The Indian caste system may be rigid, but in matters of belief and worship there is perfect toleration and freedom. Let everyone follow his *ishṭa* or favourite God, so long as he seeks to realise the Absolute. It is not possible for every man to worship the Impersonal God; let him, then find a means of spiritual progress in *image worship* and devotion to rituals and ceremonies. "Hinduism does not believe in bringing about a mechanical uniformity of belief and worship by a forcible elimination of all that is not in agreement with a particular creed. It does not believe in any statutory methods of salvation." In India the enlightened followers of all the religions act on the belief that many paths lead to God. It is a common sight in India to see the Hindus and Muslims gathered at the shrine of a saint or a holy man revered by both because he was a God-intoxicated soul.

The religious toleration practised by the Hindus should really be an object lesson to the rest of the world. The Hindu solution of religious difference is the only possible solution in the matter of conflict of religions. Says Radhakrishnan: "The world would be a much poorer thing if one creed absorbed the rest. God wills a rich harmony and not a colourless uniformity. The comprehensive and

synthetic spirit of Hinduism has made it a mighty forest with a thousand waving arms each fulfilling its function and all directed by the spirit of God. Each thing in its place and all associated in the divine concert making with their various voices and even dissonances, as Heraclitus would say, the most exquisite harmony should be our ideal."

An Indian, be he a Hindu or Muslim or Christian or a Parsi, is *religious* by temperament. This Religiosity, religiosity is to be seen firstly in the complete absorption of the Indian in the worship of something *Divine*, and in his eager piety to endow places of worship. The Hindu has been pronounced to be idolatrous and attached to temples, and so he is. It has been said that there are thirty three crores of gods (and not only Shiva or Vishnu), worshipped in India, and that may or may not be a fact. But no Hindu who worships a stone or clay idol worships the lump of clay or stone; the idol is a symbol of the one God for him, a centre to concentrate his devotion upon. The temple is a place where he can divest himself of worldly thoughts and plunge his mind into the ocean of the Infinite. The Muslim rejects, in theory, idols and visible symbols or aids to the worship of one God, but in Indian environment he too seeks the help of some material objects to fulfil his longing for his Creator. The Indian Muslim's attachment to the shrines of saints and pirs, and his fondness for mosques are essentially born of the same religiosity as that of his Hindu brother. The Catholic in India is very little removed from an ordinary Hindu in fondness for his temple (church) and the images of Christ or the Virgin Mary or the Saints. The Indian Muslim sets as great a store upon pilgrimages (to Mecca or to holy shrines) as the Hindu; the religious urge is the same.

The Indian religiosity is also to be seen in the multip.



licity of rituals and fasts and feasts in India, which is thoroughly religious in character. The Hindu satisfies the poetry and devotion in his soul by celebrating seasonal occasions like the coming of spring, or the days of Ram and Krishna or of the great incarnations and saints. The Indian Muslim likewise celebrates not only his Ids at the conclusion of the month of Ramzan and in commemoration of the great sacrifice of Abraham, but also days connected with the Prophet's life and mission, and those associated with his patron Saint. To the Indian a *fast* is as religious an observance as a *feast*; generally a feast preceded by a fast, for the Indian cannot have his enjoyment until he is properly purified by a fast and austerities. Both Hindus and Muslims lavishly celebrate in a religious manner such events in their families as births, weddings, thread ceremony (among the Hindus) or circumcision (among the Muslims), and deaths.

A third manifestation of religiosity in the Indian temperament is the instinctive reverence paid to the anchorites, the hermits, and the religious orders. The king on his throne must come down to make his obeisance to the hermit; it is indeed only in India that "a half-naked Fakir" could be the greatest leader and the "darling" of the nation. Islam does not encourage monks and monasticism but in India the Muslims have imbibed from their birth a sentiment of reverence for the monks or dervishes of all religions. The Hindu relationship of *Guru* and *Chela* or Preceptor and Pupil which has a religious basis finds its counterpart in the Muslim *Murshid* and *Murid*. The Hindu has been blamed for creating the Brahmin oligarchy i.e. an oligarchy of the priestly class. But the position of the Maulvis, Mullas and other priests is no less paramount among the Muslims. There is something in the temperament of the Indian which must make him give the highest place and power to the man of God—the priest whose

avocation it is to call men to the remembrance of God.

The religiosity of the Indian is seen in his general attitude towards life, the attitude of one to whom material gain or earthly possessions are of no account. This attitude has degenerated into passiveness and pessimism, but a proper understanding of religion is sure again to make Indians charged with dynamism and purposiveness in life.

India is famed for its occult arts handed down from the *Guru* or preceptor to his *Chela* (disciple). A race that has for ages been in quest of the Infinite, and hungering for spirituality, could not but have had glimpses of the Invisible world and experimented with the psychic forces around us. The Indian *Yogis* and *Siddhis* have often demonstrated powers which have amazed the common folk. Some of them have been buried alive for days and months and been found alive when taken out. Some of them have been able to tell of their past births, and foretell the future. Others have been possessed of supernatural powers. Men from the West often come to India in search of "Secret India" and the Occult Masters. But the commercialism of the West pursues them even in the sacred land of India and they go as empty handed as they came—as far as spiritual wealth is concerned. They make money, of course, by writing yarns about India and its holy men. Now there are two things that must be remembered about Occultism in India. The Indian occultist pursues the occult arts not for the sake of wealth, or power, or earthly possessions, but to do good to humanity and advance in his spiritual pilgrimage. He is strictly forbidden to work miracles and advertise himself. When the little son of a Sikh Guru inadvertently used his spiritual powers to resuscitate the corpse of his playmate, the heavy toll of a life for a life was demanded as expiation for the use of supernatural powers.

Secondly, the knowledge of occult arts, or of the mysteries of Nature and the invisible world, is to be communicated only to the *adhikari*, the man fitted to be a learner. It is not a knowledge for all and sundry. Most of the Westerners who have congratulated themselves on piercing the mysteries of Indian occultism have either deluded themselves or have deliberately "sailed under false colours" to gain money and reputation.

It would be, however, futile to deny that in actual  
 Superstition. practice barbarous practices and superstitions may be followed in India in the name of religion. Men of exquisite sensibility are repelled by the animal sacrifices in the temples of Kali; and customs such as that of girls being attached to temples as *Devadasis* or "slaves of gods" (to lead a life of shame) are a blot on any nation. But these are excrescences which cannot permanently hide the greatness and radiance of the Indian belief and conduct. Because Religion is the first and last thing with the Indian and embraces all other activities—domestic, social, economic, political.....—certain abuses and perversities must naturally make their way into popular observances and rituals associated with Religion. The life of an Indian, from one end of the year to the other, is bound up with something religious—a pilgrimage, a feast, a fast, a prayer, a sacrifice.....some celebration or the other which must remind him of God, the life hereafter, and the transitoriness of things earthly.

In the details of these celebrations and rituals the various sects in India naturally differ.  
 Cleanliness. But on one point they are all agreed, viz., that the body is the temple of the spirit and must be kept *pure* for religious practices. Baths, ablutions, and purificatory rites are enjoined upon both Hindus and Muslims. To the Indian, cleanliness is

not only next to godliness, it is a part and parcel of godliness. In the Indian way of life there is one thing specific which has preserved the nation from decay and degeneration, viz, the belief that *wine* is something unclean and must be abhorred. The lure of Western ways has turned many an Indian into a wine-bibber, but rarely will an Indian muster up audacity enough to show himself as a drunkard in the presence of the members of his family: he will reserve his booze for drinking bouts at his Club (worked on Western lines.) The Muslim considers wine to be the mother of all evils, and the orthodox Hindu is of the same opinion.

It is sometimes wondered at why India has been saved from extermination at the hands of the Western civilization when the original dwellers in almost all other lands conquered by the Europeans have been either nearly wiped out or have sunk into sloth or nothingness. The original inhabitants of America and Australia have been reduced to insignificant numbers, and wherever the European conquerors have penetrated into the Dark Continent it has been the same story. This wholesale disappearance of peoples into oblivion could not obviously be the result of massacre or even economic exploitation. Even the brutal hordes of the conquering Spaniards could not have put to the sword the larger part of the original Americans. What killed the conquered races was the "water of the Europeans" (*Feringhee-ka-panee*) i. e. liquor, especially Whisky, and the "wind of the Europeans" (*Bad-i-Feringhee*) i. e. venereal diseases, especially syphilis, which were introduced in their lands by the influx of the European conquerors. India has been spared both these horrors because of the Indian Dharma, the Indian way of life. And it is safe to assert that, as long as Indians eschew wine, and Indian women do not go in for loose

and promiscuous relations with men, India will survive the devitalizing effects of the Western civilisation. It may be all right for the Westerner not to be without a liquor bottle or a fair charmer by his side, but the Indian does not approve of these habits.

Asoka, the great Buddhist Emperor of India, now generally recognised to be the most enlightened Indian king known to history, carved on rocks and pillars a simple but comprehensive system of ethics which was called by him Dharma or "Dhamma". This system was not of his own coinage but is was "the Dhamma for laymen, as generally held in India"; Asoka merely promulgated it "in the form, and with the modifications, adopted by the Buddhists". This Dhamma is set out in *Buddhist India* (by Rhys Davids):

Rock Edict, No. 1.

1. No animal may be slaughtered for sacrifice.
2. Tribal feasts in high places are not to be celebrated.

Rock Edict, No. 3.

3. Docility to parents is good.
4. Liberality to friends, acquaintances and relatives, and to Brahmins and recluses is good.
5. Not to injure living beings is good.
9. Economy in expenditure, and avoiding disputes, is good.

Rock Edict No 7.

- |                    |   |  |
|--------------------|---|--|
| 7. Self mastery    | { | are always possible and excellent even for the man who is too poor to be able to give largely. |
| 8. Purity of heart |   |  |
| 9. Gratitude       |   |  |
| 10. Fidelity.      |   |  |

Rock Edicts, Nos. 9 and 11.

11. People perform rites or ceremonies for luck on occasion of sickness, weddings, child birth, or on starting on a journey—corrupt and worthless ceremonies. Now

There is a lucky ceremony that may be performed,—not worthless like those, but full of fruit,—the lucky ceremony of the Dhamma. And therein is included right conduct towards slaves and servants, honour towards teachers, self-restraint towards living things, liberality to Brahmins and recluses. These things and others such as these, are the lucky ceremony according to the Dhamma. Therefore should one—whether father or son or brother or master—interfere and say, "So is right. Thus should the ceremony be done to lasting profit. People say liberality is good. But no gift, no aid, is so good as giving others the gift of the Dhamma, as aiding others to gain the Dhamma."

Rock Edict, No. 12.

12. Toleration. Honour should be paid to all, laymen and recluses alike, belonging to other sects. No one should disparage other sects to exalt his own. Self-restraint in words is the right thing. And let a man seek rather after the growth in his own sect of the essence of the matter.

Pillar Edict, No. 2.

13. The Dhamma is good. But what is the Dhamma? The having but little, in one's own mind, of the intoxications, doing many benefits to others; compassion, liberality, truth, purity.

Pillar Edict, No. 3.

14. Man sees but his good deeds, saying: "This good act have I done." Man sees not at all his evil deeds, saying: "That bad act have I done, that act is corruption." Such self-examination is hard, yet must a man watch over himself, saying: "Such and such acts lead to corruption,—such as brutality, cruelty, anger and pride. I will zealously see to it that I slander not out of envy. That

will be to my advantage in this world, to my advantage verily, in the world to come."

The Dhamma or the way of life acceptable in Asoka's days, is substantially the way of life commended in India up to the present time.

## CHAPTER 6.

### INDIAN WISDOM.

India is not proud of wars and foreign conquest. Indian Wisdom gigantic factories and workshops, huge machines and costly luxuries. But she is proud that she is the teacher of spiritual truths to the entire human race. The *Indian Wisdom* is the great gift of India to the world, a gift that time cannot dim or destroy. Not that India has not had great warriors and generals, world navigators and commercial magnates; organisers of industry and inventors of novelties; but the Indian Wisdom is something so immeasurably superior to earthly glories, that it is not necessary for an Indian to think of any heritage other than this life-giving and eternal fountain at which the weary, thirsty world has slaked its thirst, and will do it again.

Before the memory of man the eternal Vedas, revealed by the Creator to Indian Rishis (seers), gave knowledge and illumination to humanity. The Greeks, who became the teachers of arts and sciences to Europe, derived something of their wisdom and inspiration from India, even as the latter-day Arabs or Saracens transmitted the wisdom of India to the Europe of Dark Ages and taught it Arts and Chivalry. When the Western civilization which took its rise four or five centuries ago with the "Renaissance" gets out of fashion or out of existence, the Western World will once more turn to this ancient seat of

wisdom. Already, the Indian Yoga and Vedantist philosophy have created a furore in advanced circles in Europe and America, and although their true worth may not be recognised by the ignorant, or what is worse, their character and essence misrepresented by sensation-loving hocus-pocus sort of journalists of Paul Brunton type, the world in its agony will of necessity have to seek a solace and guidance in Indian wisdom like the German philosopher, Schopenhauer, who declared: "In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of my life and will be the solace of my death."

Like the eternal Himalaya and like those eternal rivers which flow from the Himalays, the Sindhu and the Ganga (Ganges), the fountain of Indian wisdom is eternal and ever-flowing. There has been no time, not even in the days of India's greatest degradation, when this fountain did not bubble forth and offer its clear limpid waters to the thirsty mouths of the ignorant and the dispirited. In the long ago the message of the Vedas was conveyed to the world in a thousand tongues; then, the gospel of Gautama Buddha penetrated to the utmost corners of the civilised world and by mixture with the Semitic genius took the shape of Christianity. Later on came the great teachers Shankar, Ramanuja and other Acharyas. Medieval India gave to the world the sweet soul-stirring strains of Gurm Nanak, Kabir, Chaityana and the Sufi saints, and in our own age a shining galaxy of teachers of universal wisdom has illumined the spiritual firmament—Dayananda Saraswati, Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Vivekananda and others. The inspired utterances of Aurobindo Ghose are furnishing guidance to eager disciples and seekers on the path even in the days of a great war.

India is fortunate in having for her classical and sacred



The Sanskrit  
Language.

language the most perfect of languages —the divine Sanskrit. An eternal and universal wisdom requires a perfect language for the purposes of expression, and such a language is Sanskrit, the parent of the Indian languages, and the noblest of the languages given to the world by the Aryans. Schlegel remarks of Sanskrit: "Justly it is called Sanskrit, *i.e.* perfect, finished. In its structure and grammar it closely resembles the Greek, but is infinitely more regular and therefore more simple, though not less rich. It combines the artistic fulness indicative of Greek development, the brevity and nice accuracy of Latin; whilst having a near affinity to the Persian and German roots, it is distinguished by expression as enthusiastic and forcible as theirs."

"The Vernaculars of India are of great beauty and vitality and have always been in living touch with the Sanskrit tongue," and hence "they contain the supreme ethical and spiritual wisdom of the saints and sages of India in as abundant a measure as the Sanskrit tongue. The songs of Vidyapati and Chandidas, the devotional hymns of Mira Bai, the famous Ram Manas Saras of Tulsi Das, the songs of the saints of the Maharashtra, the Ramayana of Kamban, the ineffably beautiful and uplifting and inspiring *Thevarams* and *Tiruvachakam* and *Tiruvoimozhi*, and the recent master-pieces of Bankim Chander Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore," as well as the soul-stirring verses of the Sikh Granth and the desert melodies of the Sufis of Sind, are as great literature as any "in point of poetic vision, imaginative presentation, melody of style, criticism and interpretation of life, and the power of uplifting the earthly life into the life divine." But the common progenitor or inspirer of all these Indian languages is the divine

Sanskrit; even the Dravidian languages have received an impetus by the spread of Sanskrit lore and learning.

The treasures of Indian wisdom in Sanskrit have come down in their original form because they were *memorised* and handed down from generation to generation without admixture of foreign elements or spoiling of correct pronunciation. This gave rise to the absurd theory that Indians did not know the art of writing and that they borrowed their script so late as 350 B. C. or thereabouts from the Phoenicians or some other race of traders! "When geometry and astronomy flourished so highly and extensively in India more than 3,000 years before Christ, according to the calculation of the celebrated astronomer, Bailly, is it at all conceivable that writing should have been unknown before 350 B. C.?"

By universal consent the *Vedas* are the primal source of the treasury of Indian wisdom. Literally, the word Veda means *Knowledge*, but it is more particularly applied to the four Vedas, the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda, the oldest scriptures known to humanity. "The Vedas are held to be divine truths revealed from time to time to the *rishis* in their supra-normal consciousness. It is believed that they saw the Supreme Truth and so they are glorified by the name *rishi*. The religion, philosophy, ritualistic practices, civic conduct and even social relations of a Hindu are supposed to be guided by those codes which are now known as *Smritis*, but all of them are based upon the sacred sanction of Vedic authority. Even the *Itihasas* and *Puranas* are to be read as commentaries on the sacred Vedas. Manu, the greatest lawgiver of India, has explicitly told us that these should be considered as an elaboration of the Vedas. It is a recognized rule of procedure

The Vedas and the Upanishads.

that whenever there seems to be a difference between the Sruti (the Vedas) and the Smriti (the Puranas and other works), the Sruti has to be upheld as the supreme authority and the Smriti has to be interpreted in consonance with that.....The whole life of a Hindu from the conception upto the last rites on the funeral pyre, has to be sanctified by the recitation of Vedic *mantras* (sacred texts)."

"The Vedic scriptures, broadly speaking, comprise four great works, viz, *Rig-Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sama Veda* and *Atharva Veda*. Each of these again has three main divisions, viz, the Samhitas (collections of sacred texts), the Brahmanas (commentaries) and Aranyakas (forest books).....the famous Upanishads are mostly different chapters of the Aranyakas. Some scholars include in the Vedic literature a body of Sutras (aphorisms) known as Kalpasutras. The Samhitas and Brahmanas are loosely designated as *Karmakanda* (the portion relating to rituals), the Aranyakas as *Upasanakanda* (the portion relating to meditation) and the Upanishads as *Jnanakanda* (the portion dealing with supreme knowledge)."

Professor Max Muller says that the Vedas "are the oldest of books in the library of mankind" ; unfortunately, however, there is no reliable or authoritative translation available. But even the fragments, in garbled translations, have won the applause of humanity. "When the Yajur Veda was presented to Voltaire, he expressed his belief that it was the most precious gift for which the West had ever been indebted to the East. Guignault says: 'The Rig Veda is the most sublime conception of the great highways of humanity'."

European scholars, and others who have followed the commentary of Sayana, have found in the Vedas worship of many gods (to whom sacrifices were made) side by side with references to one God. But there are scholars like the late Pandit Guru Dutt Vidyarthi (author of the

"Terminology of the Vedas") who follow the commentary on the Vedas of Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj and an uncompromising monotheist, and opine that, by misunderstanding attributive terms as names of deities, the Vedas have been falsely interpreted. For instance, the words *Mitra* and *Varuna* have been shown by Pandit Guru Dutt to mean "measurer" and "acceptable to all" and *not* as names of gods. By this method of interpretation the 7th mantra of the second Sukta of Rig Veda has been shown by the Pundit to be not a mantra to a god *Varuna* or *Mitra* but to mean that water can be formed by the combination of Oxygen and Hydrogen !

In the *Upanishads*, too, which have been variously termed as *Vedantas* or the end of the Vedas and *Rahasya* or secret (esoteric), there are some passages favouring monism, others seeming to advocate dualism, while some others are tinged with qualified monism. As the Vedas and the *Upanishads* embody the highest wisdom vouchsafed to man they must of necessity prescribe "different courses for different people," so that their wisdom illumine the understanding of all men.

The most sacred of all the Vedic Mantras is the *Gayatri* which has been translated as follows : "Let us meditate on that excellent glory of the divine Vivifier. May He enlighten our understanding." The Indian does not pray to God for material possessions and means of aggrandizement ; he prays that his understanding be illumined.

Here is a celebrated hymn from the Rig-Veda, as translated by Monier Williams :—

What God shall we adore with sacrifice ?  
Him let us praise, the golden child that rose  
In the beginning, who was born the lord—  
The one sole lord of all that is—who made

The earth, and formed the sky, who giveth life,  
 Who giveth strength, whose bidding gods revere,  
 Whose hiding place is immortality,  
 Whose shadow, death ; who by his might is King  
 Of all the breathing, sleeping, waking world—  
 Who governs men and beasts, whose majesty  
 These snowy hills, this ocean with its rivers  
 Declare ; of whom these spreading regions form  
 The arms ; by whom the firmament is strong,  
 Earth firmly planted, and the highest heavens  
 Supported, and the clouds that fill the air  
 Distributed and measured out ; to whom  
 Both earth and heaven, established by his will  
 Look up with trembling mind ; in whom reveal  
 The rising sun shines forth above the world.  
 Where'er let loose in space, the mighty waters  
 Have gone, depositing a fruitful seed  
 And generating fire, there *he* arose,  
 Who is the breath and life of all the gods,  
 Whose mighty glance looks round the vast expanse  
 Of watery vapour — source of energy,  
 Cause of the sacrifice—the Only God,  
 Above the gods. May he not injure us !  
 He the Creator of the earth—the righteous  
 Creator of the Sky, Creator too  
 Of oceans bright, and far-extending waters.

Here are a few extracts from the Upanishads : —

“The intelligent One is never born nor dies, it is neither  
 produced from anything nor itself produces anything ; it is  
 birthless, eternal, undecaying and ancient. It does not die  
 with the death of the body.”

“Know the soul as the rider, the body as the chariot,  
 the intellect as the charioteer and *manas* as the reins.  
 The organs are called the horses, and the sense-objects

the roads for them. The soul joined to the body, organs and mind is designated by the sages as the experiencer.....The objects are higher than the organs, *manas* is higher than the objects, the intellect is higher than that, *mahat* (cosmic intelligence) is higher than the intellect, the unmanifested is higher than *mahat*, and the infinite-being (*purusha*) is higher than the unmanifested. There is nothing higher than *purusha*. That is the limit, the supreme goal."

"Knowing Him alone one transcends death. There is no other way to go by."

"He who is devoid of intelligence, unmindful and always impure never attains that status (of Brahman) and transmigrates. But he who is intelligent, alert and always pure attains that status from which he is no more born... The intelligent man should merge his speech (i.e. all organs) in the mind (*manas*), the mind in the intellect, the intellect in cosmic intelligence, and that again in the placid self."

"After studying the scriptures and realizing the Truth, an intelligent person should discard them entirely, as one who cares for the rice does with the chaff."

"There is no bliss in finite things, the Infinite alone.

tinguished from the *Karma Kanda* or that section of the Vedas which deals with various ceremonies and sacrifices. Not only the orthodox Vedic thinkers, whether Monists or Dualists or the Qualified Monists...find their authority in the Upanishads, but even the heterodox sects—Buddhism, Jainism and others—owe their philosophical contents to the Upanishads.

"Apart from all its merits as the greatest philosophy, apart from its wonderful merit as theology, as showing the path of salvation to mankind, the Upanishadic literature is the most wonderful painting of sublimity that the world has. Here comes out in full force that individuality of the human mind, that introspective intuitive Hindu mind.....the language and the thought and everything come direct, they fall upon you like a sword-blade, strong as the blows of a hammer they come.....

"Strength, strength is what the Upanishads speak to me from every page.....Are there no human weaknesses?—says man. There are, say the Upanishads, but will more weakness heal them, would you try to wash dirt with dirt? Strength, O man, strength, say the Upanishads, stand up and be strong; aye, it is the only literature in the world where you find the word, 'Abhiih', 'fearless', used again and again; in no other scripture in the world is this adjective applied either to God or to man.....Aye, this is the one scripture in the world, of all others, that does not talk of salvation, but of freedom. Be free from the bonds of nature, be free from weakness! And it shows to you that you have this freedom already in you.....

"The second great idea which the world is waiting to receive from our Upanishads is the solidarity of this universe.....Our Upanishads say that the cause of all misery is ignorance; and that is perfectly true when applied to every state of life, either social or spiritual. It

is ignorance that makes us hate each other, it is through ignorance that we do not know, and do not love each other. As soon as we come to know each other love comes, must come, for are we not one? Thus we find solidarity coming in spite of itself." (Vivekananda).

The Indian has every reason to believe that the Vedas (including the Upanishads) represent the high water mark reached by human wisdom with the aid of Divine Revelation.

For the Indian masses, however, the Vedas and the Upanishads, if not sealed books, are books properly to be understood by the initiated few only. The books on which the common mass relies for ideals and precepts are the two great Epics (*Itihas*), the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* (including the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Song Celestial). The *Ramayana*, composed by Valmiki, tells us about Rama who went into exile, in the forest, for fourteen years, in order to honour a promise extracted from his father, and whose wife Sita, won by him in an open competition of skill in arms, having been carried away by force by Ravana, the King of Ceylon, was won back after a terrible war in which Rama was aided by the faithful Hanuman, the great Monkey-leader. But the unlucky Sita had to retire into a hermitage to let her husband rule over his people with self-respect, and ultimately was swallowed by the earth from which she had sprung. Rama is shown, throughout, "as the special manifestation of the Lord for the protection of *dharma*", and the ideal *man* after whom every Indian must model his conduct in all the affairs of life. Sita is the ideal wife, the perfect woman, the priceless jewel in all Indian literature and history. From the beginning of her life to the end when she said "I have always with my mind, body, and words prayed for Rama's

The Ramayana and the figure of Sita.



well-being and by virtue of that may the Goddess Earth give me abiding place within her" and the Earth opened. to receive her, she behaves with a nobleness, chastity, fortitude, and forgiveness which we find in no other woman known to history or fiction. "You may exhaust the literature of the world that is past, and I may ask you, that you will have to exhaust the literature of world of the future, before finding another Sita", said great Swami Vivekananda. "Sita is unique; that character was depicted once and for all. There may have been several Ramas perhaps, but never more than one Sita. She is the very type of the true Indian woman, for, the Indian ideals of a perfected woman have grown out of that one life of Sita; and here she stands these thousands of years, commanding the worship of every man, woman, and child, throughout the length and breadth of the land of Aryavarta. There she will always be, this glorious Sita, purer than purity itself, all patience, and all suffering. She who suffered that life of suffering without a murmur, she the ever-chaste and everpure wife, she, the ideal of the people, the ideal of the gods, the great Sita, our national God she must always remain.....All our mythology may vanish, even our Vedas may depart, and our Sanskrit language may vanish for ever, but so long as there will be five Hindus living here, even if only speaking the most vulgar *patois*, there will be the story of Sita present, mark my words. Sita has gone into the very vitals of our race. She is there in the blood of every Hindu man and woman; we are all children of Sita".

The *Mahabharata* or the great War (between the Pandavas and Kauravas) is "the biggest of the world's epics" being "about eight times the size of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* put together and is an encyclopaedia or a "whole literature rather than a single homogeneous work; it constitutes a veritable

treasure-house of Indian lore, both secular and religious, and gives, as does no other single work, an insight into the innermost depths of the soul of the people of Hindusthan. It is a 'Song of Victory', commemorating the deeds of heroism in a War to avenge insult to womanhood, and maintain the just rights of a dynasty that had extended the heritage of Bharata and had knit together the North, East, West and South of India into one empire. It is a *Purana Samhita* or collection of old tales containing diverse stories of seers and sages, of beautiful maids and beautiful wives, of valiant warriors and of saintly kings. It is also a magnificent *Kavya* or poem describing in inimitable language the fury of the battlefield, the stillness of the forest hermitage, the majesty of the roaring sea dancing with billows and laughing with foams, the just indignation of the true daughter of a warrior line, and the lament of the aged mother of dead heroes. It is a *Sastra* or manual of law and morality, and of social and political philosophy, laying down rules of conduct for the attainment of *trivarga* or the three great aims animating all human conduct, viz, *dharma*, *artha* and *kama*, i. e. moral and religious duties, material wealth and pleasures of the flesh. Above all, it is a *moksha-sastra* or sacred treatise showing the way to salvation, expounding the highest religious philosophy of India and inculcating reverence not only for Narayana, the Supreme Spirit, Sarasvati, from whom flow all learning and the arts, and Nara, the superman, the ideal fighter and seer, the close associate of God, but also for mankind in general. 'This is the holy mystery' declares the *Santi Parva* of the great epic. 'there is nothing nobler than humanity.' (The Cultural Heritage of India). The *Mahabharata* is in many respects the greatest book in the literature of the world, and it is certainly the one book that must be read in the original or in translations by anyone desiring

to understand the spirit of India.

The *Bhagvad Gita*, or the Song Celestial, is a part of the *Mahabharata*, being an exhortation addressed to Arjuna, one of the five Pandavas and the hero of the *Mahabharata*, by Krishna, his Divine Charioteer, when Arjuna overcome by attachment and sentimental considerations would not fight on the battlefield of Kurukshetra :

I cannot—will not fight—O mighty Krishna,  
I seek not victory, I seek no kingdom.  
What shall we do with regal pomp and power,  
What with enjoyments or with life itself,  
When we have slaughtered all our kindred there !

Krishna tells Arjuna that, as a Kshatriya, his duty was to fight, and that he was foolish to entertain doubts about the propriety of fighting and killing his relations when the soul was eternal and indestructible :

The wise grieve not for the departed, nor for  
those who yet survive  
Ne'er was the time when I was not, nor thou,  
nor yonder chiefs, and ne'er  
Shall be the time when all of us shall be not;  
as the embodied soul  
In this corporeal frame moves swiftly on  
through boyhood, youth, and age  
So will it pass through other forms hereafter—  
be not grieved thereat  
The man whom pain and pleasure, heat and  
cold affect not, he is fit  
For immortality; whatever is not cannot be,  
whatever is  
Can never cease to be. Know this—the Being  
that spread this universe  
Is indestructible. Who can destroy the Indes-  
tructible ?

These bodies that inclose the everlasting soul,  
Immortal have an end; but he who thinks the  
And he who deems it a destroyer, are alike  
Kills not and is not killed ; it is not born, nor  
It has no past nor future—unproduced, un-  
Who knows it fixed, unborn, imperishable,  
How can that man destroy another, or extin-  
As men abandon old and threadbare clothes to  
So casts the embodied soul its worn-out frame  
No dart can pierce it ; flame cannot consume  
Nor scorching breezes dry it—indestructible,  
Of heat or moisture or aridity, eternal, all-  
Steadfast, immovable, perpetual, yet imperceptible,  
Incomprehensible, unfading, deathless, unimaginable.  
(Translation by Monier Williams).

with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, the devout gift of the pure-minded I accept." To the common reader the most instructive lesson of the *Gita* is the marvellous doctrine of *Karma-Yoga* which asks us to abstain from work, but to do our duty without attachment to the fruit of our work :

Perform all necessary acts, for action  
Is better than inaction, none can live  
By sitting still and doing naught ; it is  
By action only that a man attains  
Immunity from action. Yet in working  
Ne'er work for recompense; let the act's motive  
Be in the act itself. Know that work  
Proceeds from the Supreme. I am the pattern  
For man to follow ; know that I have done  
All acts already, nought remains for me  
To gain by action, yet I work for ever  
Unweariedly, and this whole universe  
Would perish if I did not work my work.

Krishna, however, "knows the dangers of a life of mere action, and so his exhortations include the teachings of the highest meditation, knowledge and devotion." It is impossible to give an idea here of these sublime teachings which have moved the highest admiration of great souls. In his poem *Brahma* and passages on Plato in *Representative Men* the American philosopher, Emerson, has paid his homage to "divine Krishna." To the orthodox Hindu the *Bhagvad-Gita* is the scripture, *par excellence*, the summation of his faith, for whether he believes in monism or dualism, theism or pantheism.....as a matter of fact in any *ism*, the *Gita* furnishes him the necessary direction for his spiritual progress.

If the *Bhagvad Gita* contains the essence of India

Krishna, Lord of  
love.

wisdom, Krishna, the Teacher of this wisdom, is regarded by the Hindus as the Perfect One, the greatest of all the incarnations of God, nay the Lord Himself. "Krishna, the preacher of the Gita, was all his life the embodiment of that song Celestial; he was the great illustration of non-attachment. He gives up his throne and never cares for it. He, the leader of India, at whose words kings come down from their thrones, never wants to be a king. He is the simple Krishna, ever the same Krishna who played with the Gopis [village maidens who tended cows]. Ah, that most marvellous passage of his life, the most difficult to understand, and which none ought to attempt to understand until he has become perfectly chaste and pure, that most marvellous expansion of love, allegorised and expressed in that beautiful play at Brindavan, which none can understand but he who has become mad with love, drunk deep of the cup of love! Who can understand the throes of the love of the Gopis—the very ideal of love, love that wants nothing, love that even does not care for heaven, love that does not care for anything in this world, or the world to come?.....Even the Gita, the great philosophy itself, does not compare with that madness, for in the Gita the disciple is taught slowly how to walk towards God, but here is the madness of enjoyment, the drum.

The Child Krishna playing on His flute in the midst of His beloved cows and making mad, with His melodious creation, animate and inanimate, is the most frequent motif in Indian art and worship. Krishna, Lord of Love is the Soul of India, to whom a vast majority of Indians turn everyday in rapture and prayer. Even Muslim poets have not escaped the irresistible attraction of Krishna and have composed songs in His praise and adoration.

It is in the *Bhagvata Purana*, the most popular of the eighteen Puranas, that the story of Krishna is given in amplest detail, and this Purana is therefore a favourite reading with the Hindus. "The Puranas were written with the object of popularizing the truths taught in the Vedas by presenting them in relation to concrete personages and to the events of their lives," and are therefore sometimes called the fifth Veda. Five topics are supposed to be dealt with in every Purana: (1) The creation of the Universe or primary creation. (2) Its destruction and re-creation or secondary creation. (3) The genealogy of gods and Prajapatis or patriarchs. (4) Periods of different Manus. (5) Histories of royal dynasties. "The primary creation is the emergence of the primary evolutes from Prakriti or primordial matter under the control of Isvara." The secondary creation refers to the secondary evolutes. "The Absolute (Para Brahman) is Isvara when in a state of relation to cosmic evolution. From Maya or Prakriti which is controlled by Isvara come the five *tanmatras* (subtle elements). Isvara in relation to these becomes the Hiranyagrabha. From the *sattvika* (pure) element of the *tanmatras* comes each of the five *jnanendriyas* (organs of knowledge) and from the *sattvika* aspect of the totality of the *tanmatras* comes the *antahkarana* (mind). From the *rajasika* (active) aspect of each of the *tanmatras* comes each of the *Karmendriyas*

(organs of action) while from the *rajasika* aspect of the totality of the *tanmatras* comes the *prana* (Breath). From the *tamāsika* (inert) aspect of the *tanmatras* come the five *bhūtas* (elements). By the combination of these the universe is manifested. Hiranyagarbha in relation to the gross universe is called Viraj. The *Bhagvata Purana* describes how the creator went on creating form after form till he created man and was pleased when man emerged, as he alone can behold and realize God."

"The value of the above view is that it gives a rational description of evolution. Modern science is unable to explain how the senses or the mind could have emerged out of matter which alone is postulated by it. Nor is it able to state how matter could be self-active and purposeful. The Puranas then proceed to describe the historic evolution of the human destiny in the unfoldment of time. The four *yugas* are *kṛita* (*satya*), *treta*, *dvāpara* and *kali*. The last consists of 4,32,000 years. The durations of *kṛita*, *treta* and *dvāpara* are four times, three times, and twice the duration of *kali yuga*. All the four *yugas* put together form a *mahayuga*. Seventy one *mahayugas* form a *manvantra*. There are fourteen *manvantras*..... There are also *Sandhis* or twilight periods amounting to



groups dealing respectively with the threefold aspect of Godhead : *Brahma* the Creator, *Vishnu* the Preserver, and *Siva* the Destroyer. Much has been made of this that some Puranas exalt Vishnu, others Siva and so on. The explanation is simple : " The fact is that each Purana has preferences but no exclusions in regard to the gods. Whether we call a Purana a Saiva Purana or a Vaishnava Purana, we find references to the *lilas* (exploits) of various gods, in each of the Puranas. For the purpose of intensifying devotion to one god, he is described as the Supreme, but this does not mean a denial of godhood to the other gods ..... The *Padma Purana* says in express terms : ' Bramha, Vishnu and Mahesvara, though three in form, are one entity. There is no difference among the three except that of attributes.' "

The most popular of the Puranas are the two Vaishnava Puranas sometimes called the Maha Puranas or great Puranas, the Vishnu and the Bhagvata. The latter is easily the best known of the Puranas because it describes Krishna Lila or the life and exploits of Krishna.

Educated Indians have not much love for the Puranas for they feel that the stories contained in the Puranas have encouraged idolatry and superstitions among the Hindus and weakened them as a race. Swami Vivekananda was of the view that the stories in the Puranas have weakened the Indians "till we have become real earthworms, crawling at the feet of everyone who dares to put his foot on us." The worship of thirty three crores of gods and fetishes, that has disfigured the life of the Hindus, has received a powerful impetus if not had its origin from the currency of Puranic stories among the lower classes.

The puranas may be popular expositions of spiritual truths in the form of mythology, legends and fiction. But the philosophical exposition of spiritual truths is contained

The Six Dars-  
hanas.

in the six *Darshanas* or six views or Demonstrations : the Sankhya (of Kapila), the Yoga (of Patanjali), the Nyaya (of Gotama), the Vaiseshika (of Kanada), the Purva Mimamsa (of Jaimini) and the Vedanta (of Vyasa). These six systems have been called the six systems of Hindu philosophy, but that is a misnomer. "Darsana does not mean philosophy ; it means viewpoint. The six *darshanas* are the six stages through which the mind progresses in its approach towards Brahman. Siva, the supreme Wisdom, says that the six *darsanas* are his six limbs and they are not to be separated on any account from one another."

The oldest system, the Sankhya ("Enumerative") is so-called "because classification of principles is characteristic of the system."

The Sankhya, Kapila, the founder of this system, "rejects the conception of Brahman and the world-soul. He distinguishes matter, which is real, and an infinite plurality of individual souls, which are not regarded as emanations of a single world-soul. The ultimate cause of the world is primeval matter (*prakṛti*), which in spite of its oneness consists of three constituent elements called *gunas*. Suffering arises from the non-distinction of soul and matter ; but discriminative knowledge causes deliverance from suffering. The Sankhya is thus not only a system explaining the world, but also a method of salvation." (Macdonell).

misery can be annihilated and bliss attained. "The aim of the Yoga is to teach the means by which the human soul may attain complete union with the supreme soul. This fusion (*laya*) or union of individual with universal spirit may be effected, even in the body. According to Patanjali, the author of the system, the very word *Yoga* is interpreted to mean the act of 'fixing or concentrating the mind in abstract meditation,' and this is said to be effected by preventing the modification of Citta or the thinking principle [which modifications arise through the three *Pramanas*, perception, inference and verbal testimony, as well as through incorrect ascertainment, fancy, sleep, and recollection], by the constant habit (*abhyasa*) of keeping the mind in its unmodified state—a state clear as crystal when uncoloured by contact with other substances—and by the practice of *Vairagya*—that is complete suppression of the passions. This *Vairagya* is only to be obtained by *Isvara pranidhana* or the contemplation of the Supreme Being, who is defined to be a particular *Purusha* or Spirit unaffected by works, applications, etc, and having the appellation *Pranava* or *Om*. The repetition of this monosyllable is supposed to be attended with marvellous results, and the muttering of it with reflection on its meaning is said to be conducive to a knowledge of the Supreme and to a prevention of all the obstacles to Yoga. The eight means of mental concentration are—1. *Yama*, 'forbearance,' 'restraint'. 2. *Niyama*, 'religious observances', 3. *Asana*, 'postures'. 4. *Pranayama*, 'suppression of the breath' or 'breathing in a peculiar way'. 5. *Pratyahara*, 'restraint of the senses'. 6. *Dharana*, 'steadying of the mind'. 7. '*Dhyana*', 'contemplation'. 8. *Samadhi*, 'profound meditation' or rather a state of religious trance." (Monier Williams).

The *Nyaya* and *Vaisesika* systems are generally taken

The Nyaya and  
Vaiseshika.

together because they are complementary; "they may be described as strictly scientific systems of logic and the theory of knowledge" Nyaya means "going into

a subject" or *analysis*, as opposed to the word Sankhya which means *synthesis*. The Nyaya system "was intended to furnish a correct method of philosophical inquiry into *all the objects and subjects* of human knowledge, including, amongst others, the process of reasoning and laws of thought." Some people have confused Nyaya with logic; as a matter of fact logic was "merely one part of a single topic" out of the 16 topics dealt with in Nyaya.

The author of Nyaya is careful to point out, in his very first aphorism "that salvation is the summum bonum and the ultimate objective of a spiritual aspirant".

The Vaiseshika system of Kanada "endeavoured to explain the origin of the world from atoms", and arranged its inquiries under seven categories: (1) Substance (2) Quality or property (3) Act or action (4) Generality or community of properties (5) Particularity or individuality (6) Co-inherence or perpetual intimate relation (7) Nonexistence or negation of existence. These Vaiseshika metaphysics were happily blended with the Nyaya epistemology and formed into one coherent system which postulated "the ultimate reality of atoms as the material cause of the world and God as rather the organizer and engineer of the world-order. The world process proceeds in cycles and so far as its cyclic existence is concerned it is without a beginning and is coeval with God. The individual souls are eternal entities dating from a beginningless time and so have a parallel existence with God and the world.....The Nyaya-Vaiseshika school does not believe in monism and its philosophy can be characterized as uncompromising pluralism. The relation of individual souls to God is neither one of pure identity nor one of identity in difference, but one of absolute and

unqualified otherness. The relation of God to the individual selves is not internal but strictly and purely external. God is alluded to as being in the position of a father to the suffering souls and His comic activity has been spoken of as inspired by considerations of justice and mercy alike." ("The Cultural Heritage of India.") The Nyaya-Vaisheshika system is according to some writers, a system of *Theism*.

The *Purva-Mimansa* of Jaimini "does not concern itself, like the other systems, with investigations into the nature of soul, mind, and matter, but with a correct interpretation of the rituals of the Veda and the solutions of doubts and discrepancies in regard to Vedic texts caused by the discordant explanations of opposite schools..... The Veda, said Jaimini, is itself authority and has no need of an Authoriser. His first Aphorism states the whole aim and object of his system, viz, a desire to know duty (*dharma jijñasa*). When amplified, it may be thus, stated: Understand, O student, that, after studying the Veda with a preceptor, a desire to know *Dharma* or duty is to be entertained by thee." (Monier Williams).

According to the Mimansa, "work recommended by the scriptures, the Vedas, has been convincingly proved to be the source of all blessings that man can get. It is through such works that man can fulfil his desires and at last attain to emancipation, which is tantamount to the extinction of all misery and sorrow. The Mimamsakas do not believe that knowledge divorced from ritualistic work can enable a man to rise to the full stature of his being."

The sixth system is called *Vedanta*, the end of the Vedas or *Uttara-Mimansa* i. e. "the discussion of the second part" or the theoretical

The Vedanta.

part of the Vedas, the *Purva Mimansa* being the discussion of the first or practical (or ritualistic) part of the Vedas. Says Monier Williams: "The following simple confession of a Vedantist's faith can be added from the Chandogya Upanishad (III. 14). All this universe indeed is Brahma; from him does it proceed; into him it is dissolved; in him it breathes. So let every one adore him calmly. Here, then, we have presented to us a different view of the origin of the world. In the Nyaya it was supposed to proceed from a concurrence of innumerable, eternal atoms; in the Sankhya from one original eternal element called Prakriti, both operating independently, though associated with eternal souls and, according to one view, presided over by a supreme soul. But in the Vedanta there is really no material world at all, as distinct from the universal Soul. Hence the doctrine of this school is called *A-dvaita*, 'non dualism.' The universe exists but merely as a form of the one eternal essence. He is the all-prevading spirit, the only really existing substance (*Vastu*).....The early Vedantic creed has the merit of being exceedingly simple. It is comprised in three words, occurring in the Chandogya Upanishad, *Ekaṁ evadvitīyam*; 'the only essence without a second'; or in the following line of nine short words, Brahma Satyam jagan mithya jivo brahmaiva naparah, 'Brahma is true, the world is false, the soul is only Brahma and no other.' As the Nyaya has much in common with the practical philosophy of Aristotle, which gave to things and individuals, rather than to ideas, a real existence, so the Vedanta offers many parallels to the idealism of Plato.....the later Vedantists teach—that the world is all Maya, 'a mere illusion'. This illusion theory, now so popular among Indian philosophers, receives little countenance in the Upanishads, being rather imported from Buddhism... How, indeed, can it be.

denied that eternal things exist, when we see them before our eyes and feel them at every instant? But how, on the other hand, can it be maintained that an impure world is the manifestation of a pure spiritual essence? To avoid this difficulty, the supreme spirit is represented as ignoring himself by a sort of self-imposed ignorance, in order to draw out from himself for his own amusement the separate individuated souls and various appearances, which, although really parts of his own essence, constitute the apparent phenomena of the universe. Hence the external world, the living souls of individual men, and even Isvara, the personal God, are all described as created by a power which the Vedantist is obliged, for want of a better solution of his difficulty, to call Avidya, generally translated 'Ignorance,' but perhaps better rendered by 'False knowledge' or 'False notion.'

"Of this power there are two distinct forms of operation viz. 1. that of envelopment (*avarana*), which enveloping the soul, causes it to imagine that it is liable to mundane vicissitudes—that it is an agent or a patient; that it rejoices or grieves, etc.—as if a person under a delusion were to mistake a rope for a snake: 2. that of projection (*vikshepa*), which affecting the soul in its state of pure intelligence, raises upon it the appearance of a world, producing first the subtle elements and drawing out from them seventeen subtle bodies (also called *linga-sarira*, comprising the five organs of sense, the five organs of action, the five vital airs, with *buddhi* and *manas*), and the five gross elements in the same order as in the Sankhya. Hence the soul mistakes itself for a mere mortal, as it mistook the rope for a snake. By reason of Avidya, then the Jivatman or 'personal soul of every individual', mistakes the world, as well as its own body or mind, for realities, just as a rope in a dark night might be

mistaken for a snake. The moment the personal soul is set free from this self-imposed Ignorance by a proper understanding of the truth, through the Vedanta philosophy, all the illusion vanishes and the identity of the Jivatman and of the whole phenomenal universe with the Paramatman, or 'one really existing spirit', is re-established". Monier Williams is not justified in saying that the Maya or illusion theory of the Vedanta has been imported from Buddhism. If it had been so, Shankaracharya, the greatest exponent of the Vedanta, would not have countenanced it as he strictly believed in the authority of the Sruti i.e. the Vedas and the Upanishads. As a matter of fact it is the proud claim of the Vedanta that "all systems of philosophy, wherever found or developed, are but approaches to the common *end* or summit of Vedanta, which is the end of all knowledge. This end or goal of Vedanta is thus described. It is that which being known, everything becomes known, and which being attained, nothing else remains to be attained."

He who wants to traverse the broad highway of

The Tantras. Ancient Indian Wisdom must go along the way of the Vedas and the *Itihasas*,

the *Puranas* and the six *Darshanas*. But there are byways which lead to strange and secret places and which being known to the initiated few only have not been investigated fully as yet. For instance, there are the *Tantras* which are as old as the oldest Indian scriptures and form "a fifth Veda (in place of the *Puranas*) for the Saktas or worshippers of the active energizing will (*sakti*) of god—personified as his wife, or sometimes as the female half of his essence.....the principal Hindu deities are sometimes supposed to possess a double nature, or, in other words, two characters, one quiescent, the other active. The active is called his *Sakti*



.....The active producing principle whether displayed in creation, maintenance, or destruction—each of which necessarily implies the other—became in the later stage of Hinduism a living visible personification. Moreover as destruction was more dreaded than creation and preservation, so the wife of the god Siva, presiding over dissolution, and called *Kali*, *Durga*, *Parvati*, *Uma Devi*, *Bhairavi*, etc. became the most important personage in the whole Pantheon to that great majority of worshippers whose religion was actuated by superstitious fears. Sometimes the god himself was regarded as consisting of two halves, representing the male principle on his right side, and the female on his left—both intimately united, and both necessary to re-creation as following on dissolution. It may be easily imagined that a creed like this, which regarded the blending of the male and female principles, not only as the necessary cause of production and reproduction, but also as the source of strength, vigour, and successful enterprise, soon degenerated into corrupt and superstitious practices. And, as a matter of fact, the Tantrika doctrines have in some cases lapsed into a degrading system of impurity and licentiousness". (Monier Williams).

It was the *Vam Margi* sect in the dark ages of India which brought the Tantras into disrepute by literally understanding the five M's in the Tantras, or the five *tattvas* (principles), to mean free indulgence in wine, meat, fish, cereals and sexual union. There is a *higher* sense in which *wine* and *sexual* union etc., must be understood.

The Tantras lay down *Sadhanas* or *practices* and *mantras* or sacred formulae which enable the aspirant, even thought living the life of a householder, to attain to *Sakti* or power which is the *female* principle of the Supreme Being and which is worshipped therefore under the form of a goddess, *Durga* (consort of Siva,) *Sri* or

Lakshmi (the consort of Vishnu), Śaraswati (the goddess of speech) etc. The worship of the phallic emblem and of goddesses like Astarte or Ashtaroth in far-off Asiatic lands and Egypt are traced to Tantric rituals. The Tantras are held to teach "magic" and "auto-suggestion," but their real object is to teach the aspirant to attain pure and perfect consciousness," the state of *sat-chit-ananda*, Perfect Being, Perfect Consciousness and Perfect Bliss. By Tantric mantras and practices "the vast magazine of static power" which is "coiled" at the centre of every being,—the kinetic or operative power being only "but a drop in the ocean of its counterpart coiled power"—is made conscious and released. This is the rousing of the *Kundalini*, a term now made famous by Woodroffe and other writers on the Tantras and *Shakti*. It can safely be said that as time goes on more and more researches will be made in the Tantras, and a proper study made of the mantras or mystic sounds, and yantras or mystic diagrams, and Sadhanas or mystic rites of the Tantras.

The Tantras or the Scriptures of Power should be studied as a complement to the study of  
 The Charvakas. Vedic scriptures or the Scriptures of Knowledge or Wisdom. They do not deny or controvert the traditional Indian wisdom. But there were thinkers in ancient India who frankly denied the teachings of the Vedas and who were called the *nastikas* or atheists. They were the followers of Charvaka and are sometimes called Lokayatas. Their doctrines are preserved in the Aphorisms of Brahaspati. Beginning with a denial of Vedas, these thinkers turned materialists and denied past and present births and existence of any reality before birth or after death except the four primary elements of which the mind was a product. When the body perished, consciousness perished with it: there was no soul apart from the body. The Charvakas denied

that there was *karma* and so denied the existence of *adrishta* or Fate. As a consequence, they considered "*Karma* or the fulfilment of desire" to eat, drink, and be merry "to be the *summum bonum* of human life."

## CHAPTER 7. INDIAN SAGES.

The fountain of Indian wisdom has never run dry. There has been an uninterrupted line of sages who have, in their lives and teachings, demonstrated the efficacy of those spiritual truths which have been the proudest heritage of the Indian race since the dawn of time. The following groups of sages will be found specially instructive to the student of Indian wisdom:—(1) The founders of Buddhism and Jainism (2) The great Acharyas (3) The mediaeval saints (4) The Muslim Mystics (5) The modern reformers and mystics.

Gautama Buddha, Sakyamuni, whose teachings under the name of Buddhism are followed by at least one-fourth of the human race, is undoubtedly the greatest man that the history of the world speaks of. Swami Vivekananda contemplates Gautama as continuing the work of harmony which Sri Krishna had begun in the Gita.

At the age of twenty nine, one night, twenty five centuries ago, Gautama left his princely palace, his wife and his son, to wander on "what was perhaps the most noteworthy journey ever made by a mortal, every step of which has since been marked by costly and artistic monuments, which successive generations of pilgrims have smothered in flowers." (Radhakumud Mookerji: *Men and Thought in Ancient India*). The prince had turned a mendicant and an ascetic to find a remedy for the ills of life—sickness, decay, old age and death. He went and put himself under two renowned teachers of



GAUTAMA BUDDHA.

Yoga, "seeking the highest good, the incomparable path to Peace Supreme", but he did not get what he wanted. Then he went to "the jungles of Uruvela near the present temple of Buddha-Gaya" and spent six years in meditation and austerities. Gautama's self-mortification was extreme, but it did not bring spiritual illumination. So he ended his penances and made his way to a Bo-tree on the full-moon day of the month of Vaisakha. He sat cross-legged under the tree, facing the east, taking a vow that he would never stir from his seat until he had attained the supreme and absolute wisdom. And on that day at the age of 35, Gautama attained to Enlightenment or became the *Buddha*. But he kept to his seat under the Bo-tree for seven days, "experiencing the bliss of emancipation." In the beginning the Buddha was not inclined to give forth the Truth he had won to a race that only sought and revelled in pleasure, but he finally made up his mind to publish it to the world: "Of deathlessness, O ! I disclose the portals. Ye that have ears come, hearken and believe." And he preached the Truth for forty-five years until he passed away at the age of eighty.

people. Go not in twos to one place. Preach the Law in spirit and in letter, the whole and full, pure path of holiness". This was the beginning of the spread of Buddhism all over the civilised world—not by sword and flames as most other religions have spread, but by sweet persuasion, service and sacrifice.

A most affecting scene ensued when the Buddha went to his paternal palace on his round of begging for alms for himself and the monks of his Order. His wife threw herself at his feet and asked their son, Rahula, to claim his paternal inheritance from his father. And the Buddha conferred on Rahula the ordination of noviciate and made him a monk. The round of the daily activities of the master "comprised meditation, begging for alms, or attending invitation for meals, followed by discourse to the laity, leading to fresh conversions, return to the monastery, suggestion of subjects for meditation by the monks in their chambers after midday meal, his own retirement for meditation, discourse to the public in the after-noon, evening bath, meditation, discourse with monks after meditation, meditation and rest. His was thus a double life—the inner life of introspection and meditation and the outer life of objective activity consecrated to the service of his fellow human beings—like the two wings of a bird by which it is up-borne in its progress towards the skies! The language in which the Buddha preached to the people was not Sanskrit, but what was then the popular idiom of Eastern Hindustan, allied to Pali," (Mookerji). The Buddha spoke calmly and with severe dignity and was always ready to put and examine his questioner's or opponent's position first before making any statement himself.

The Buddha was an incarnation of humility and tenderness, with occasional gleams of humour and raillery. He "preferred to take his stand upon the virtues and per-

actions of human nature and not upon any display of superhuman powers for securing adherents." He did not only preach spirituality but made men positively spiritual by making them servants of humanity: the Buddha was the greatest teacher of *Ahinsa* (non violence) and Service the world has seen. And he never claimed any divine or superior position for himself but admonished his disciples, at the time of his death: "Hold fast to the truth as a lamp. Hold fast as a refuge to the truth. Look not for refuge to any one beside yourselves.....And after I am gone, let the Truth and Rules of the Order which I have set forth and laid down for you all, be the teacher to you!"

Between the orthodox beliefs of the day and the Buddha's gospel there were certain differences: the Buddha "had no faith in Vedic sacrifices, especially in animal killing therein" and "he found no place for God too in his system of religion, nor did he discuss the creation and destruction of the universe". But he believed strictly in the Law of Karma and Transmigration, the wheel of births and deaths, from the working of which one became free only when he attained *nirvana* or non-existence. The suffering of men was due to *Kama* or desire. This desire could only cease after the removal of *avidya* or ignorance (of Truth), which in its turn "requires for its own disappearance knowledge, or perfect wisdom, or perfection of wisdom." One who aspires after this supreme knowledge (*bodhi*), or the Bodhisattva, is to do certain duties the most important of which are *Mahamaitri* i. e. "Great Love" and *Mahakaruna* i. e. "Great Compassion." The beauty of Buddha's gospel is that not only did it teach *Ahinsa* i. e. non-violence, and put an end to animal sacrifices, but it went further, and enjoined on the aspirant love and compassion for all creatures. The definition of "great love" for the follower of Buddha is that love which prompts a man "to offer his body and life and

all sources of good to all living beings without any expectation of return," while "the thought or intention to work for the deliverance of all sentient beings fallen into the unfathomable and unbounded ocean of *samsara*, is called *karuna* (compassion). And that *karuna* with which a Bodhisattva desires *bodhi* or enlightenment not for himself but for others is *mahakaruna*" or great compassion. Small wonder it is, then, that the followers of Buddha set an example of service of humanity which remains unparalleled in history. As Monier Williams observes, "That which especially characterizes Buddhism is the perfection of benevolence and sympathy displayed towards all living beings, and carried to the extreme of avoiding injury to the most minute animalculæ and treating with tenderness the most noxious animals. Even self-sacrifice for the good of such animals and of inferior creatures of all kinds is a duty. It is recorded of the Buddha himself that in former existences he frequently gave himself up as a substituted victim in the place of doves and other innocent creatures to satisfy the appetites of hawks and beasts of prey; and on one occasion, meeting with a famished tigress unable to feed her cubs, he was so overcome with compassion that he sacrificed his own body to supply the starving family with food."

Unfortunately, the sublime teachings of the Buddha came afterwards to be perverted, and Buddhism was turned into idolatry and superstition. "The earlier Buddhists in their rage against the killing of animals, had denounced the sacrifices of the Vedas; and these sacrifices used to be held in every house. There was a fire burning and that was all the paraphernalia of worship. These sacrifices were obliterated, and in their place came gorgeous temples, gorgeous ceremonies, and gorgeous priests, and all that you see in India in modern times ..... Thus, in spite of the preaching of mercy to animals, in spite of



the sublime ethical religion, in spite of hair-splitting discussions about the existence or non-existence of a permanent soul, the whole building of Buddhism tumbled down piecemeal." (Swami Vivekananda). Buddhism as a religion has not many adherents in India, but every Indian knows that Gautama Buddha has been India's greatest single *gift* to the world. Fitly has it been said, "Perhaps never while the world has lasted has there been a personality who has wielded such a tremendous influence over the thinking of humanity as has Gautama, the bearer of the Buddha thought," (Paul Dahlke).

Mahavira, the twenty-fourth and last of the Jain Tirthankaras ("saints who have made the passage of the world"), and the organiser, if not the founder of Jainism, was an elder contemporary of Gautama Buddha, and was like him of Kashtriya or the warrior caste.

Mahavira, the teacher of the Jains.

According to the Jain philosophy or the teachings of Mahavira, "matter, which consists of atoms, is eternal, but may assume any form, such as earth, wind, and so on. All material things are ultimately produced by combinations of atoms. Souls are of two kinds : those which are subject to mundane transmigration and those which are liberated. The latter will be embodied no more ; they dwell in a state of perfection at the summit of the universe; being no more concerned with worldly affairs, they have reached *nirvana*.

" The souls with which the world is filled are different from matter ; but being substances they are also eternal. Subtle matter coming into contact with a soul causes its embodiment : being then transformed into eight kinds of *Karma* and thus forming as it were a subtle body, it clings to the soul in all its migrations. The theory of *Karma* is the key note of the Jain system. The highest

goal consists in getting rid of all *Karma* derived from past existences, and acquiring no new *Karma*. One of the chief means to this end is the performance of asceticism. The Jain system differs from Buddhism in emphasizing asceticism to a much greater extent, even to the point of religious suicide; and in the total avoidance of taking life of any kind, such avoidance being described as the highest duty." (Macdonell: *India's Past*.)

The Jains carry their *Ahimsa* "to so preposterous an extreme that they strain water before drinking it, sweep the ground with a brush before treading on it, never eat or drink in the dark, and sometimes wear muslin before their mouths to prevent the risk of swallowing minute insects."

The sages Gautama and Mahavira were great moral teachers and establishers of religions. The Acharyas, which have been called monastic, pessimistic, and heretic—monastic because these religions laid stress upon the orders of monks who lived apart from the world, pessimistic because they regarded *Samsara* or the life of this world to be a bondage from which one must liberate himself, and heretic because the authority of the Vedas was denied, and there was no mention of *Isvara* or Supreme Being or the Creator. The revival of the traditional Indian beliefs was the work of four great Acharyas or Teachers: Shankaracharya who lived in the eighth century after Christ, Ramanujacharya who lived in the eleventh century, Madhvacarya (12th century) and Vallabhacharya (15th century). "By his insistence on the idealistic non-duality, and yet of non-reality of the sense-perceptions, Sankara supplied a charm to hold the faith of the religious mystic, and of the rarefied idealist who is repelled by crude materialism." Ramanuja "was a preacher of qualified Advaitism—or non-duality—in which the Supreme Spirit, the Universal Soul,

becomes at once the cause of the outside world and the material of all creation. In the God Vishnu he finds this Supreme Soul particularly and pre-eminently embodied; and hence his insistence on the adoration of Vishnu as the only means of gaining freedom from rebirth." Madhva-charya has been held to be "the foremost among the realistic philosophers," while Vallabhacharya was the sage who "tried to show that over and above the paths of Karma (Action), Jnana (knowledge) and Vedic bhakti (devotion), there is one more path, that of divine grace, which if once enjoyed, makes our life divine."

Of these four, Shankaracharya is by far the best known. Indeed, there is hardly another Shankaracharya. name among the philosophers of the world to compare with that of Shankaracharya for keenness and subtleness of intellect and power of clear exposition. He lived only for thirty-two years but during this short life he established his claim to be "the chief of the Vedanta philosophers" and "the principal exponent of the *advaita* (non-dualistic) doctrine or strict monism". Swami Vivekananda has spoken of Shankaracharya as the verifier and purifier of Indian spiritual existence.

In his commentaries on the Upanishads, the Bhagvad-Gita, and the Vedanta Sutras, Shankaracharya "is an out-and-out follower of the Sruti" (revealed knowledge or the Vedas), and yet his style is not "that of a living disputation, but rather that of a scientific treatise." These commentaries are not so much commentaries as authoritative and independent religio-philosophic treatises. They are the last word on their respective subject-matter.

The fundamental doctrines of Shankara's philosophy are summed up in the famous statement: "Brahman alone is real, the world is false, the individual is Brahman

and none else." The world is a figment of *maya*, a mere appearance, but it has a reality of its own even "as the objects of dream, although known as false on awakening, are real within the limits of the dream. Similarly, the world is also relatively real and is said to be false (*mithya*) only when knowledge dawns. It should be specially noted that although the world is false, yet it is not altogether non-existent like the son of a barren woman."

Shankaracharya was not only a prince of philosophers, but an intensely practical man, and his was the largest share of any in the revival of faith in India in the Vedas and the Upanishads, and the Vedic ceremonies and rituals. According to Swami Vivekananda, "the great glory of Shankaracharya was his preaching of the Gita. It is one of the greatest works that this great man did among the many noble works of his noble life—the preaching of the Gita, and writing the most beautiful commentary upon it. And he has been followed by all founders of the orthodox sects in India, each of whom has written a commentary on the Gita." Four *Maths* or monasteries in the four quarters of India have still their Shankaracharyas who carry on the work of the Master. The orders of Sanyasis established by Shankaracharya are still in existence; Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the most "puissant" of the Indian sages of our times, belonged to one of these orders (the "Saraswati" order, named after the famous lady Saraswati, wife of Mandan, whom Shankaracharya vanquished in disputation after a long and protracted debate, in the course of which, it is said, he had temporarily to transfer his living breath to the corpse of a Raja and live for a month the life of a householder and so know the mysteries of married life—mysteries which were unknown to him as a Brahmachari).

After Shankaracharya, all the people in India who are Advaitists or Monists believe in his doctrine viz., that

God is both the material and the efficient cause of the universe, though *Maya*, but not in reality. "God has not become the universe, but the universe is not, and God is.....It is as Shankara who first found out the idea of the identity of time, space and causation with *Maya*.....This is a peculiar theory—this *Maya* theory of the Advaita Vedantists. The Brahman is all that exists, but differentiation has been caused by this *Maya*. Unity, the one Brahman, is the ultimate, the goal, and herein is an eternal dissension again between Indian and Western thought". (Vivekananda).

Ramanuja, the next great Acharya or Teacher, did not accept the monism or Advaitism of Shankaracharya, but propounded the doctrine of a "qualified monism" and "sought to combine with belief in one deity the doctrine of the love of God (*bhakti*).". Like Shankara, Ramanuja was also a South Indian. "Originally a monist, he became the founder of the theistic Vaishnava sect of South India. His chief work is the *Sribhasya*, or 'Glorious commentary' .....He assumes three principles : the individual soul, the inanimate world, and God as the Supreme soul. His theories of the external world are based on the Sankhya philosophy and the Puranas. His doctrine of devotion (*bhakti*) to a personal deity he sought to combine with his conception of nature" (Macedonell).

Swami Vivekananda had a great admiration for Ramanuja. He said of him : "Then came the brilliant Ramanuja. Sankara, with his great intellect, I am afraid, had not as great a heart. Ramanuja's heart was greater. He felt for the down-trodden, he sympathised with them. He took up the ceremonies, the accretions that had gathered, made them pure so far as they could be, and instituted new ceremonies, new methods of worship for the people who absolutely required them. At the same time he opened the

door to the highest spiritual worship from the Brahmin to the Pariah. That was Ramanuja's work." The religion of Ramanuja is "a religion of harmony and hospitality. It does not stop with affirming the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. It goes a step further and asserts that God is the inner life and soul of all beings. Its idea of God as the soul of the world brings out the immanence of God in all beings, spiritual intimacy and the goodness of God. As every *jiva* is big with Brahman, the realization of the Absolute is a real possibility." (*The Cultural Heritage of India*).

Madhavacharya, also called Anand tirtha and Purna-Madhavacharya. *Prajna* ("one whose knowledge is complete"), was also a South Indian, and wrote a commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*, and still more celebrated commentary on the *Brahma-Sutras* (aphorisms of Vyasa). "By him the worship of Vishnu, or Hari, was preached as the worship of one Supreme God, eternally existent, the world subsisting as his form, on whom the souls of men are dependent, though abiding themselves distinct" (Frazer). His doctrine has been called the doctrine of Realism, because "according to his system *purushartha*, the chief good to be attained by the thirsting intelligent being, is real and worth attaining. The *jiva* (individual soul) is endowed with real means of working towards it, and the law of causation is not set aside. The knowledge attained by working through the means and conditions instituted by the Lord is attained through His guidance and grace. The *jiva* knows and realizes the Lord in a manner and degree quite sufficient for his purpose. When he has attained the final state, he really enjoys his blissful heavenly life in the constant worship of the Lord and of those higher than himself." (*The Cultural Heritage of India*).

Vallabhacharya was the latest of the four Acharyas;

he lived as late as the end of the fifteenth century. He controverted the doctrine of *Maya* of Shankaracharya and propounded the doctrine that "the universe has been created by the Lord out of His own self for the sake of sport, on the analogy of a spider and its web, without His undergoing any change". "The Lord was alone, without a second, in the beginning. He desired to be many for the sake of play, and as he desired, thousands of souls came out of the Akshara instantaneously like sparks from fire. In special cases the souls may come out from the Lord Himself". Therefore the universe cannot be unreal, nor can the soul be unreal as it is a part of Brahman. "Souls are varying in their nature, as the Lord wants variety for the sake of sport" and there are three classes of souls : (1) those that are busy with worldly matters, (2) those that follow the Vedic path according to the prescribed injunction, and (3) those that worship the Lord out of love, which is engendered only through the divine grace. Those who are the most favoured of the Lord i. e. to whom divine grace is vouchsafed, the men on the *pushti-marga*, are drunk with the love of the Lord even as the Gopis were drunk with the love of Krishna. "One who follows the *pushti-marga* aspires to be a Gopi and worships the Lord in that attitude. In fact, all souls represent the feminine principle and have the Lord as their natural husband".

Vallabhacharya's cult of Krishna (to whom must be dedicated "one's own self and belongings including all the members of the family" even as the Gopis did), led to some very undesirable practices at the hands of his successors, the Maharajs. By setting themselves up as incarnations of Krishna, and playing *Krishna Lila* with their women disciples, they brought the Vallabhi sect into disrepute. Vallabhacharya's teachings showed the path of renuncia-

tion and not enjoyment, for "whem everything is dedicated to the Lord, the devotee cannot in any way exercise the rights of ownership over anything"; but it is in the nature of mankind to pervert even the most sublime teachings and Vallabhacharya's system of *Bhakti* or love for God became debased as time went on.

The next group of Indian sages to be mentioned is that of the saints and mystics who in the Mediaeval saints and mystics mediaeval times brought faith, wisdom and love, in the lives of Indians. Certain characteristics are common to all of them,

viz., extraordinary poetical faculty and skill, utterance of God's Name, and popular exposition of philosophical doctrines in Indian vernaculars so that even the unlettered masses could understand and follow the import of their teaching. Incidentally, these Masters were the pioneers of the literature in the modern Indian languages, and some of them remain unexcelled as poets up to the present day. The great work that these sages did was that they awakened a catholic sense of duty, non-sectarianism, and devotion in their disciples. Hindus as well as Muslims flocked to hear them preach and sing; the shackles of caste and creed did not bind these sages. They derived their inspiration from the perennial fountain of Indian wisdom, and were fit descendants of the great ones who had chanted the *mantras* of the Vedas and the Upanishads; but they were not word-splitters and metaphysicians. Their way was the simple way of synthesis, tolerance, *bhakti* or devotion, and surrender to the Lord. They were in their lives great reformers as well, and with them there was no distinction of the high and the low.

These saints and mystics, mainly of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, are too numerous to be mentioned. Three of them, viz, Mirabai, Tulsidas and Surdas, were



more poets and singers than founders of religious sects or assemblies. In the other group—that of great Teachers and Saints—the most prominent names are those of Ramananda and his more famous disciple Kabir, Chaitanya (Sri Gauranga), Guru Nanak the founder of Sikh religion, Tukaram and other Saints of Maharashtra, and the Saivite saints of South India.

To take the three great singers first: "Mira Bai was the most celebrated princess of her time for beauty and romantic poetry" (Tod).

Mirabai. She died in 1546. Married to a prince of the great royal house of Mewar she was drunk with the love of the Lord (Krishna) in whose worship she wandered from shrine to shrine, much to the scandal of her orthodox relatives.

"Mira Bai's commentary on the 'Gita Govinda' (of Jayadeva) shows her passionate devotion to the form of Krishna she worshipped, while songs of her own composition are sung far and wide, from Dvarka to Mithila. Tradition loves to tell how, as she worshipped the image of Krishna, pouring forth her impassioned appeal for its love, the image opened and closed around her so that she for ever disappeared from earth." (Frazer). Her sweet songs are a continuous wail in which the soul, personified as Radha, or one of the Gopis, pours forth her love for Krishna, God Incarnate. Men condemned to die on the gallows for political crimes have been known to go gaily to their end chanting the hymns of Mirabai and preparing to meet the embrace of the Lord.

Of Tulsidas (born in 1532) the author of "the great *Ram-Charit-Manas* or *Ramayana* in Hindi verse" it has been said, "Pandits may talk of 'Vedas' and of the 'Upanishads,' and a few many even study them; others may say they put their faith on the 'Puranas'; but to the vast

majority of the people of Hindustan, learned and unlearned alike, their sole norm of conduct is the so-called 'Tulsi Kirt-Ramayan' " (Grierson). Tulsi Das was not only poet but a nation-builder as well. His *Ramayana* "constitutes a kind of Bible for the ninety millions of Hindus who inhabit the vast tract lying between Bengal and the Punjab, the Himalaya and the Vindhya ranges," says Macdonell, but as a matter of fact it is a book now being studied by all who are Indians, for the language in which Tulsidas wrote—Hindi—is fast becoming the *lingua franca* of India, and Tulsidas's *Ramayana* is the greatest piece of literature in the language.

According to Frazer, author of *A Literary History of India*, the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas "saved the people by the influence of its chastened style and purity of sentiment and thought from falling into the depths of the lewdness and obscenity towards which the realistic rendering of the mystic and spiritual loves of Radha and Krishna was ever tending, and reached in Tantric and Saivite orgies. The mission of Tulsidas was simply to set before the people of North India, in their own vernacular, the figure of Rama as a personification of the underlying Essence of the Universe, as a revelation beyond the senses and reasons, to be received with faith, and cherished with love and piety ..... The best of all that Hinduism holds is sublimely rendered in one grand hymn to Rama."

Surdas, an elder contemporary of Tulsidas, "is the great poet of the literature dedicated to Surdas.

Krishna, as Tulsidas is of the literature of Rama..... He was blind from his very birth." In the sixty thousand verses of his *Sur-Sagar* he poured forth his faith and devotion for Krishna. It is said that Krishna himself "wrote down the verse and the blind poet spoke them. The story goes that the poet, finding that his amanuensis wrote faster than his own thoughts flew, seized

the deity by the hand and was thrust away, on which the poet wrote a verse declaring that none but the deity himself could tear the love of Krishna from his heart :—

‘Thou thrustest away my hand and departest, knowing that I am weak, pretending that thou art but a man. But not till thou depart from my [heart will I confess thee to be a mortal’ ” (Frazer).

Ramananda was the founder of a great movement which was like a bridge connecting Ramananda. the Hindus on this bank with the Muslims on the other. “He accepted all that was true and of permanent value [in our splendid heritage—the philosophy of meditation (*yoga*) and knowledge from the North and the absolute surrender (*prapatti*) of the *bhakti* cult from the South—and rejected all that was untrue, ephemeral or rigidly sectarian..... . When Ramananda perceived that there is only one God who is the origin of all, all the distinctions of caste and creed vanished for him, and he saw humanity as one large family, and all men as brothers. No man is higher than another through his birth, but only through his love and sympathy. So he started preaching to all without any reserve, and his fundamental teaching was the gospel of love and devotion. He also gave up the use of Sanskrit, and started preaching in the language of the people, thus laying the foundation of modern Vernacular literatures... Though Ramanand used the popular name of Rama, his God was the one God of love and mercy, without any imperfection—not the unconditioned Brahman of the Vedanta, but the beloved, the friend, the Lord of one's heart.” Among the disciples of Ramananda were several men of low castes : weavers, barbers, butchers etc.

Of these disciples, the weaver Kabir outsoared his master. Macdonell gives the following Kabir. account of his life and work: “A disciple

of Ramanand was the famous Benares weaver Kabir, who wished to abolish not only caste, but religious and sectarian barriers. In praising God he made no difference between Allah and Ram, calling himself 'the child of Allah and Rama'. By birth a Muhammadan, he became an enthusiastic theist of the type of a *bakhti* worshipper of Rama. The formalities and ceremonies of both Hindu and Muhammadans were equally hateful to him. Here are some of his words: 'There is nothing but water in the sacred bathing-places; and I know that they are useless, for I have bathed in them. Lifeless are all the images of the gods: they cannot speak; I know it, for I have called aloud to them.' He seems to have died about 1518. At his funeral, Hindus and Moslems, according to legend, vied for the honour of disposing of his body, that of one who belonged to themselves. Kabir's adherents at the present day number only about 8,000 to 9,000 in Northern and Central India. But his influence can be traced in other sects, especially in the religion of the Sikhs." The poems and songs of Kabir are popular over Northern India; they show that he was both "great poet and a great singer." They inculcate love of Truth and simple and natural life, toleration for all, compassion and love for mankind, and a disbelief in the efficacy of austerities and mortifications of flesh. Kabir had many renowned disciples, the most famous of whom was the Saint Dadu who in his turn left a number of followers to continue the liberal tradition of Kabir.

Chaitanya, the great saint of Bengal, is regarded as the incarnation of Krishna though "himself always rejected divine adoration of his person, and it was only when he was in a state of trance that he sometimes exclaimed. 'I am He'." "Fired and inspired at Buddha Gaya by the universal sympathy of the Buddhist sage, and then roused to enthusiasm by the

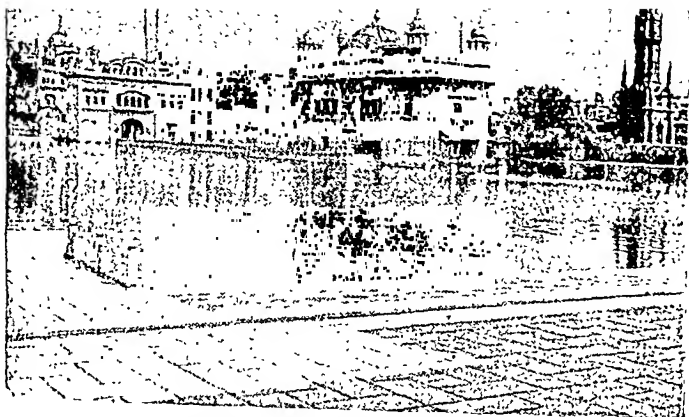
memories of the thought of past ages, as they swept round the temple of Jagannath, (he) went forth from his wife and child as an enthusiast, to proclaim the love for, and of, Krishna, at a time when Luther was preparing to rouse Europe by his preaching. Five hundred years have passed away since the time Chaitanya spread a faith in the saving grace of Krishna throughout the land, nevertheless down to the present day, the same spirit that inspired Chaitanya continues still to dwell among his followers" (Frazer). Chaitanya organized *Sankirtana* i. e. singing the names of God in chorus, with the accompaniment of musical instruments, and made crowds of men ecstatic with the love of God even as he himself had become ecstatic. It is said that he "lapsed into tears on hearing any one cry 'Krishna, Krishna.'" Shri Chaitanya presented an exalted code of moral conduct for the *Vaishnava*, "the worshipper of Krishna, and said that the sensual and the voracious could not attain salvation, but he did not encourage suffering or self-mortification "as it hardens the heart instead of softening it, and makes it unfit for loving devotion."

The mission of Guru Nanak (born in 1469 A. D.) and of his illustrious successors, the nine Gurus, was to weld the Hindus and Muslims together in a common worship of the one Supreme Being, and put an end to the rituals and ceremonies which had clouded the fair face of Indian Wisdom. Guru Nanak travelled extensively over several lands and preached everywhere the lesson of Oneness of God and the brotherhood of man. He exhorted his hearers and followers to remember and utter the Name of God. He said: "They are not to be called pure who only wash their bodies; rather are they pure who enshrine the Lord in their hearts. He who worships stones, visits places of pilgrimage, dwells in forests, renouncing

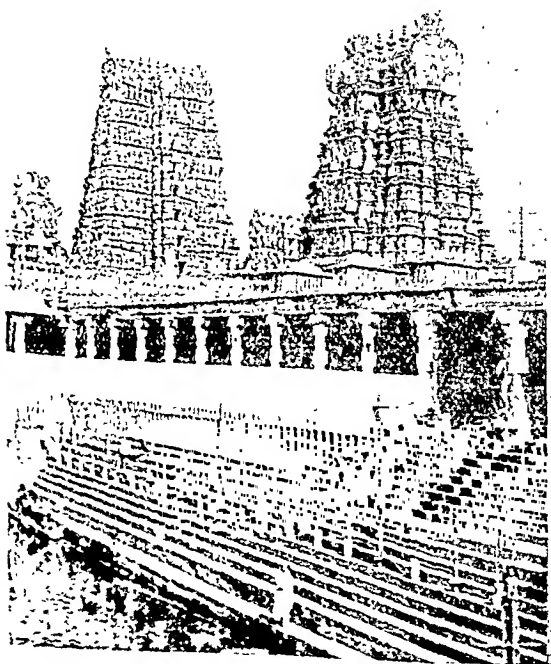
Guru Nanak and  
the Sikh religion

the world, only wanders and wavers. How can his filthy mind become pure? He who meets the True One shall obtain honour." Guru Nanak was the incarnation of humility, sweetness, and service, and called himself the lowliest of the low, but he and his nine successors are adored by millions in the Punjab and Sind as incarnations of Divinity. The Sikh Gurus laid great stress on the need of a proper guide or Guru for the seeker on the spiritual path. "Everybody talks of the four objectives and the smritis and the *sastras*, together with the Pundits who read them, do the same. But without the Guru the meaning of the true objective is not found. The object of salvation is obtained from the Love of God."

Much discussion has followed: whether the Sikh religion founded by Guru Nanak was a reformed sect of Hinduism or was a totally different religion. A scholar like Trumpf affirmed that "Nanak remained a thorough Hindu, according to all his views, and if he had communionship with the Musalmans, and many of these even became his disciples it was owing to the fact that Sufism, which all these Muhammadans were professing, was in reality, nothing but a Pantheism, derived directly from Hindu sources, and only outwardly adapted to the forms of the Islam." The Sikhs do not accept the caste system or idolatrous practices, but all their deepest religious convictions are in the Hindu tradition. They believe in the Law of Karma, the Transmigration of Soul, and other characteristic Hindu doctrines, do not take beef, consider marriage to be a sacrament and dine and intermarry with the Hindus. The Sind Hindus are almost all followers of Guru Nanak whether they call themselves Sikhs or otherwise. It is to be noted that the ninth Guru and the last Guru, the great Guru Gobind Singh, died in order to save the Hindus and Hinduism. The Sikh religion, along with Buddhism and Jainism, may be considered to be one



THE GOLDEN (Sikh) TEMPLE—AMRITSAR.



MINAKSHI TEMPLE—MADURA.

of the most glorious offsprings of the ancient Indian Wisdom. The *Adi Granth*, the great scripture of the Sikhs, is from the beginning to the end a sublime paean in praise of the Lord and the glory of those who utter His Name and serve His creatures. "What shall we offer to Him that we may behold His council-chamber? What shall we utter with our lips, which may move Him to give us His love? In the ambrosial hours of the morn meditate on the grace of the true Name. For your good actions may procure for you a better birth, but salvation is from grace alone. We should worship the Name, believe in the Name, which is ever and ever the same and true. By praising God we get established a bond with Him." "Those who love the Lord love everybody. There can be no love of God without active service. We should do active service within the world, if we want a place in Heaven. We cannot get to heaven by mere talk; we must practice righteousness, if we want salvation."

The Sikh religion is not one of pessimism and quietism; it is a most energising and inspiring faith. The Sikh Khalsas, banded into unity and brotherhood by Guru Gobind Singh, astonished the world by their faith, bravery, and devotion.

Maharashtra has produced a long line of mystics and saints whose one aim in life was to strive after realization of God. "At Pandharpur there was a temple of Vishnu under the name of Vithoba or Vitthal, in whose cult the singing of short songs called *Abhang* played a great part." Here is a specimen given by Macdonell from one of the *Abhangs* of Saint Namdev:

The One indeed pervades all things, wherever  
glances wander;  
But veiled by Maya's magic spell, by scarce  
one is comprehended.

The saints of  
Maharashtra and  
South India.





Tukaram's verses are in the mouths of everybody in Maharashtra, and inculcate the "great doctrine" of salvation by Faith. Tukaram laid great stress on *Kirtana* or singing the praise of God. "What is required for this is not excellence in the art of music, or sweet voice, but sincere and earnest love for God. God and His greatness alone should form the subject matter of it ...*Kirtana* is rightly regarded by Tukaram as the holy confluence of God, the devotee and His name. It is a sure means of liberating oneself and others from the bondage of worldly existence. The joy in *Kirtana* is perennial and ever new. It infuses miraculous powers into a person, lifts him above all fears, brings for him the bliss of unitive life in God. If a devotee sings lying in his bed, God hears him standing; if he sings sitting, God begins to nod in joy; and if he sings standing, God begins to dance." (*The Cultural Heritage of India*). When a number of devotees joins in *Kirtan*, an atmosphere of ecstasy and devotion to God is produced, and the whole crowd becomes drunk with joy and intoxication.

Most of the medieval sages in northern India and Maharashtra derived their inspiration through Ramananda from Ramanuja, and worshipped God under the names of the incarnation of Vishnu, (either Rama or Krishna). But the saints of South India were mostly worshippers of the God Shiva. As they composed their hymns and songs in the Dravidian languages their teachings did not spread to lands outside the southern Presidency. The Southern saints followed the teachings of the four teachers of the faith of Shiva, namely Saint Appar, Saint Sambhanandha, Saint Sundarmurti and Saint Manikka who flourished before the time of the great Shankaracharya. Their worship of God as Shiva is evident from the following verse :—

"O king, my joy, mean as I am,  
who knows not any path !

O light, thou hast forsaken me,  
 Thou the true Vedic Lord,  
 Thou art the first, the last !  
 Thou art this universal whole "

(quoted by Frazer)

Islam, in its Indian environment, has given to the world great sages and masters. Their tombs and shrines are places of pilgrimage frequented by the Hindus as well

The Muslim  
 mystics and  
 saints.

as the Muslims, and no account of India

life would be complete without a reference to these saints and their worship "The

religious life of Islam is so intimately connected with saints and their worship, and its history is so intertwined with them, that to think of the one without the other becomes an impossibility. In life they were men of piety, and usually attracted attention because of alleged miraculous powers, which were proofs of Divine favour. Men sought their company for worldly as well as spiritual profit. Their words and deeds were carefully noted, and faithful disciples wrote their biographies. The historians too, noted the lives and deeds of these men, as did, for instance, Abu'l Fadl and Budayuni; while even emperors gave heed to their teachings, spent much time in their company, built elaborate tombs over their graves, and made pilgrimages to their shrines.

"The belief in saints, and the worship of their shrines and tombs by the Muslims of India is not, however, peculiar to Indian Islam. In fact, this all came largely read-made to India, through those who introduced the religious orders into the country from Afghanistan, Persia and Iraq. Further, owing to the ancient *Guru-chela* practice existing among the Hindus, and the universal belief in the worship of local Gods and Goddesses, which was the heritage of the majority of the Muslims of India through

their Hindu origin, it became all the more easy for saint-worship to become a fixed part of Muslim religious life. In fact, the Muslim masses of India seem to enter into the worship of saints with more enthusiasm than into the regular religious exercises which are obligatory. And in spite of all the influence of modern education and various reform movements, it is doubtful if there is really less saint-worship to-day than there was formerly.

"To be sure there are groups, such as the Wahhabi reformers, and the ultra-orthodox and those of western education who have cast this all aside, but to the masses, the belief in saints and their ability to grant requests, fulfil desires and perform miracles is still a real, positive, and practical belief. The devotee believes that the spirit of the saints is actually present in the tomb, that he hears the petitioner, and will intercede with God to grant requests, or that the saint, may even fulfil them himself. This close, intimate, personal relationship which the individual feels with the saint, and which he somehow believes the saint holds for him, forms one of the most interesting phases in the study of Islam in India. It is a clear indication of the deep personal need which the individual feels for closer contact and fellowship with Allah; and which somehow, he believes he can secure through the mediation of the saint who was both a companion (*Wali*) of God on the one hand, and a friend and companion of man on the other." (Titus : *Indian Islam*).

famous Lal Shahbaz whose shrine at Sewhan (Sind) attracts both Hindus and Muslims is one of the most famous patron Saints.

Of the authentic or historical Islamic characters who enjoy reputation as Saints or men of God in India, reference may be made first to the preachers or missionaries who preached some form of Shia faith in India and converted the Hindu inhabitants to this form of Islam. Some of them suffered martyrdom for their faith like Sayyid Nur Allah who came from Persia in the reign of Akbar and was martyred in 1610 A. D., being buried at Agra "where his tomb is greatly revered by all Imamis."

There are two great sects of Shias in India which have their own peculiar doctrines—the Bohras and the Khojas—and both these consist mainly of converts from the Hindus. Many names, customs, and ways of these sects resemble the Hindu ones; even the terminology of the Hindus, (for instance that of the Avatars or Incarnations), is in use by some of the followers of these sects. The advanced members of these communities have discovered in the tenets of their faith certain doctrines which appear to them un-Islamic. The Khoja Reformers, for instance, addressed a letter to their head, the Aga Khan, in which they asked him among other things: "That you will disclaim and repudiate all divine honours paid to you which rightly belong only to The True God Almighty." The explanation, really, is that on the Indian soil it is only natural that a sage or one reputed to be a sage should be paid "divine honours."

In the Sunni faith, also, there are several religious or *darwish* orders which have produced great sages. "The underlying philosophy and theology of the religious orders is Sufism; however, it does not follow that all Sufis are necessarily members of a religious order, nor is it proper

to assume that all initiates of a *darwish* order are Sufis. Nevertheless, there is a close and fundamental connection between the views of Sufis and the religious orders, so much so that the latter could not have come into being without the former. Sufism with its warm, mystical yearning after union and fellowship with God, nowhere found a more suitable soil than India, where the very atmosphere was charged with a deep longing to find God, with the result that to-day it is estimated that fully two-thirds of India's Muslim population are under the influence of some one or other of the *darwish* orders. The effort to effect union of man's soul with God, which is deemed the highest bliss, is the chief function of the religious orders."

The message of these Darwish Orders "is something like this. God has endowed all His servants with the capacity for union with Him. They have this capacity hidden in their hearts. But it cannot be developed without guidance. Therefore it is necessary that every person should voluntarily seek to attach himself to some illuminated soul," to a *murshid* or *pir*. The disciple is called the *murid*, or *salik*, the traveller. The murid must observe the rules of the order and the ritualistic practice of *Zikr* (remembrance of God) and *fikr* or meditation. The traveller has to pass through four stages "The first stage is that of our common humanity (*Nasut*), for which one has the law (*Shari'at*) of Islam; perfection in this leads on to the stage of *Malakut*, where one has the nature of angels, and must walk in the pathway of purity. The third stage is called *Jabarut* (possession of power), for which there is *Ma'rif* (Knowledge). The fourth is *Lahut* (absorption in divinity), where one has *Haqiqat* (absolute truth)." *Zikr* or remembering God produces ecstasy; some do it aloud, some do it in silence, some do it alone, some do it in congregations. "The government of the order or fraternity centres in the *pir*" and he has his own assistants.

called *Khalifas*.

Titus, from whom the above passages are taken, mentions the following to be the chief of these *Darwish* Orders: the Chishti, the Suhrawardi, the Shattari, the Qadiri and the Naqshbandi.

The Chishtis have their famous shrine of Khwajah Muin-ud-din Chishti at Ajmer where an urs or festival is held every year, and tens of thousands of Hindus and Muslims gather. Akbar was greatly devoted to this shrine and his son Salim (Jehangir) was named after Shaikh Salim Chishti who died in 1572. Other famous Saints of this Order were Khwajah Qutb-ud-din, Baba Farid, Hazrat Nizam-ud-Din Awliya and Hazrat Makhdum Sabir. That last named got his name of Sabir or *patient* because having been asked by his *murshid* to distribute alms to the poor he did not take food for several days "as his leader's orders bade him to distribute it to others, but did not authorize him to take any himself", and he might have died if the mistake had not been rectified.

The Suhrawardi Order was founded in India by Bahauddin Zakaria, whose tomb is in Multan; and the work was carried on by Sayyid Jala-ud-Din of Sind, and Sayyid Muhammad Shah Alam of Gujarat. The Shattari Order attracted Emperor Humayun, among others. The Qadiri Order owes its original foundation to Saint Abdul Qadir Jilani of Bandad, called Pir Dastgir or Piran i-Pir (Pir of Pirs), and its introduction in India to a Sayyid of Sind, Sayyid Bandagi Muhammad Ghaus. Prince Dara, son of Shah Jahan, was a disciple of Mirjan Mir who belonged to this Order. The Naqshbandi Order was introduced by Shaikh Sirhindi in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, and is thus the latest of the five great *Darwish* Orders of Muslims in India.

Besides these regular orders there are irregular groups

of *Darwishes* or religious mendicants and practitioners, the most noted of which is the Qalander Order introduced in Indian by Bu Ali Qalander (died in 1323 A.D.)

The distinguishing characteristic of the Muslim Sages in Indian has been their adherence to *Sufism*. "Sind, the first province of India to be invaded by Muslim armies, was also the first to be occupied by Muslim mystics, so that it rightly claims the distinction of being the home of Indian Sufism." The Sufi Saints in Sind trace their origin to Shah Inayet of Jhok. A long and distinguished line of Sufis has enriched the life and literature of Sind, some of these Sufis being Hindus by faith. By far the greatest of these Sufis was Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit, one of the greatest poets of India, and the Soul of Sind. In his tales, verses and *Kafis*, he has not only given lyrics of supreme sweetness and worth but has symbolised the experiences of the human soul in its search after God, and imparted lessons of the highest moral and spiritual value. Other Sufis and poets of eminence were Sachal, a truly God-intoxicated soul if ever there was one, Bekas and Bedil, Dalpat and Rohal, and Kutbshah. Certain Sindhi mystics and poets cannot exactly be called Sufis, but there is hardly any difference between their spiritual convictions and those of the Sufis. The famous Shikarpur poet Sami, who gave Vedantic ideas in moving verses in Sindhi, does not present any difference between his teachings and those of the Sufis.



Love, accepting earthly love as the first step towards the realization of celestial love. Several Sufis have had their affections pitched on a fair boy or a fair woman, and travelled by that means to God-realization. Sufistic doctrines like the *annihilation of self*, *need of a Murshid or Guru*, and *the Creation of the Universe being a sport or lila of the Lord*, have been a part and parcel of the Indian way of thinking and feeling since time immemorial. Like several other exalted doctrines the Sufistic doctrines, too, have become debased and perverted in the lives of several persons who profess them; and wine, song, and unbridled licentiousness have taken the place of God-intoxication, and quest after Eternal Beauty and Eternal Love. The orthodox followers of Islam have therefore sometimes condemned Sufism as another name for eroticism.

If the impact of Islam on Hindu India gave rise to great mystics and saints, both Hindu and Muslim, the introduction of European civilization has likewise aided in the rise of great and powerful intellects, and mystics and saints. Some of these have been frankly reformers; others have been very orthodox and even reactionary, if to hold to the traditional tenets and beliefs of ancient India is to be reactionary.

Raja Ram Mohun Roy, the founder of the Brahmo Samaj, was also the founder of Indian nationalism, being a thorough patriot at heart. He was the first great Reformer

The Brahmo Samaj, and the Theosophical Society.

India has seen in the British period, and the first to strive in modern times for a synthesis of the great religions followed in India. He condemned idolatrous practices, superstitions and cruel rites like the *Sati* and strove for the establishment of Theism or worship of one God and "the promotion of charity, morality, piety, benevolence,

virtue, and the strengthening of the bonds of union between men of all religions, persuasions and creeds."

Devendranath Tagore read in the *Isopanishad* : "God is immanent in all things, in whatsoever lives and moves in the universe ; enjoy therefore without being attached ; covet not wealth belonging to others," and lived his life in meditation and the simplicity of a recluse, in ideal surroundings in the Himalayas, earning the title of Maharishi or great Sage. He carried on the work of Theism and Reform inaugurated by Raja Ram Mohun Roy. He came to have a younger associate who attained to dazzling fame — the great orator, and founder of the New Dispensation, Keshub Chunder Sen—whose clarion cry was : "To grant salvation the merciful God has sent his new faith of Brahmoism. Lo ! the gates of salvation are wide open ; He calls one and all ; entrance through His gate is free ; no one ever returns disappointed ; the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant, all are equally welcome there." "Men and women of all classes have an equal right ; whoever truly loves God the same shall be saved, there is no caste distinction here". Keshub was very much attracted to the personality and teachings of Jesus Christ and called himself Jesu Das or Servant of Christ which gave umbrage to orthodox Hindus who had nothing but admiration for his gospel of Tolerance, Catholicism and Harmony. "The deep sentiment of *bhakti* surged in his soul and he evolved a new mysticism of his own based on the reconciliation of all faiths, which found its culmination in his announcement of the New Dispensation" (*The Cultural Heritage of India*).

The Theosophical Society, founded by Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott, has been very popular with a certain class of Indians because it has encouraged study of the ancient Indian Wisdom and preached certain mystical concepts e.g. that of the Great Adepts who form the

Great White Brotherhood and who direct the evolutionary process for the benefit of mankind. The Theosophists believe that every religion is of divine origin and has its respective role to fulfil in a great plan. Mrs. Annie Besant, the greatest name in the annals of this society, adopted India as her home and attracted a large body of adherents.

Very different from the "gentle, tender, and contemplative" leaders of the Brahmo Samaj, or the "esoteric" Theosophists, was "the sturdy, masculine and polemical" Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the most "puissant" personality India has seen in modern times, and the founder of the Arya Samaj, the Church Militant of Hinduism. He fled from home in disgust at idolatrous worship, and learnt at the feet of his guru, Virjanand, that the Vedas are the scripture of true knowledge "containing truths of science as well as truths of religion." His mission in life was to lead the effete Hinduism back to its pure Vedic origin, and to state in a challenging voice that the Vedas enjoined "worship of one Formless God", and not a worship of several gods and goddesses. No modern sage in India has done so much as Swami Dayanand Saraswati in removing social evils, giving woman her proper status, establishing the old Aryan system of Gurukula education, reviving Sanskrit studies, abolishing untouchability and caste by birth, and enjoining upon the Hindus their ancient duty of *Havan* and protection of the Cow. The work of Swami Dayanand in vivifying Hinduism and giving rational support and self-respect to the believers in Vedic system cannot be over-estimated.

Ramakrishna  
Paramhansa.

The work of rehabilitating and energising Hinduism which Swami Dayanand started by his marvellous logic, polemics, and writings was reinforced and completed in the life

and work of the great mystic and saint of Dakshineswar, Ramakrishna Paramhansa, and his world-famous disciple, Swami Vivekananda. The Paramhansa harmonised the teachings of the great Indian sages, the Monists as well as the Dualists, the men of intellect as well as the men of the heart.

Ramakrishna realized God through the worship of Kali, the Divine Mother, but he went round the practice not only of the Yoga of Hinduism but of all other religions, too, and it is said that he realized God in forms other than the vision of the Divine Mother. He went through the Tantrik practice, and through the forms of Islam and Christianity as well. Probably the most amazing thing in his life was his relations with the noble lady to whom he was married, but whom he did not know carnally, and in whom he beheld "the Blissful Mother in human flesh."

Swami Vivekananda, called "Ramakrishna's Dynamic Counterpart," was the Indian sage who not only aroused his countrymen but carried to the West the message of Vedanta and India's gospel through the ages. It was a memorable scene in the Parliament of Religions, at Chicago, in September 1893, when this yellow-robed Sanyasin, little more than thirty years old, almost starved to death, without money or credentials in his pocket, was brought to that august assembly, through the chance compassion of an American lady who had met him in the streets. As he got up to speak in the name of the most ancient Order of monks in the world, and began to convey the message of Oneness, Toleration, Freedom and Realisation, a hush fell over the vast audience. Everyone felt, instinctively, that a Master had arrived, that here was not a mere orator, a debater or a prelate, but one who had seen and known, who had the authority to speak, the power to

Swami Vivekananda.

"loose and bind". It was a strange experience for America nay for the whole West, to have an Indian preach to them the gospel of Divinity in man, and announce to them the comforting words of the Lord: "Whoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him." Swami Vivekananda exhorted his hearers to cast out the Semitic conviction of the Original Sin: "Ye are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect things. Ye divinities on earth—sinners? It is sin to call man so: it is a standing libel on human nature." He asked them to remove the screen, pierce the veil of *Maya*, and be liberated from the bondage of ignorance, and the operation of time, space and causation. After hearing Vivekananda the West could hardly call the countrymen of the Swami as benighted and barbarian. Rather, it has become a fashion or a cult over there to talk of "*Vedanta*" and "*Yoga*".

To India the Swami brought from the West the Gospel of dynamism, the gospel of strength, sacrifice, and service, and thereby galvanised an inert race into activity.

He condemned weakness and cowardice, both physical and spiritual, in no unmeasured terms, and laughed at "a nation of dyspeptics, indulging in antics to the accompaniment of khol and kartal and singing kirtanas and other songs of sentimental type". Swami Vivekananda and his co-disciples of the Ramakrishna Mission anticipated Mahatma Gandhi in speaking of "*Daridra Narayan*" and organising help and service for the depressed classes, the pariahs, the lepers, and the famished ones. The Swami did not want salvation of soul for himself; his heart was harrowed with the sight of the sufferings of his countrymen and he desired to be born again and again and die a thousand deaths to alleviate the misery of this unfortunate lot. His message to India is soul stirring: "Oh India! forget not—that the ideal of thy womanhood is Sita, Savitri,

amayanti. Forget not—that the God thou worshippest the great Ascetic of ascetics, all-renouncing Sankara, the Lord of Uma ; forget not that thy marriage, wealth, thy life are not for sense pleasure—are not for thy individual happiness ; forget not—that thou art born as a sacrifice to the Mother's altar ; forget not—that thy social order is but the reflex of the Infinite Universal Motherhood ; forget not—that the lower classes, the ignorant—the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers. Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian—and proudly proclaim, 'I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother.' Say, 'The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahman Indian, the Pariah Indian, is my brother.' Thou too clad with but a rag round thy lions proudly proclaim at the top of thy voice, 'The Indian is my brother—the Indian is my life, India's gods and goddesses are my God, India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure garden of my youth, the sacred heaven, the *Varanasi* of my old age.' Say, brother, 'The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good,' and repeat and pray day and night, 'O Thou Lord of Gauri, O Thou Mother of the Universe, vouchsafe manliness, take away my unmanliness and—*Make me a Man*' !

Swami Vivekananda's great work in making known to the West the ancient Indian Wisdom in his lectures on Vedanta has been carried on by a number of Indian thinkers and philosophers. Rabindranath Tagore, "Poet-Laureate of Asia," Nobel Prizeman and India's foremost poet in the modern period, was also a great patriot as well as a Preacher of Internationalism. He founded a University to promote the synthesis of the cultures of the East and the West. Sri Aurobindo Ghose, who has for many years led

Tagore and  
Aurobindo Ghose

the life of a recluse, has written Essays on the Gita and other books in which he expounds a philosophy of peace and harmony for a world ridden by selfishness and materialism. It is believed by many of his disciples Indian and European, that Aurobindo Ghose will be the Prophet of a New Age.

The number of those who have devoted themselves to Yoga and God-realization, and founded societies and cults based on ancient Indian Wisdom is simply legion. The Radhaswamis, for instance, have an esoteric philosophy of their own in which they lay much emphasis on their Guru and the Voice of the Inner self. Their practical genius is seen in their famous colony of Dayalbagh, Agra, which is an important industrial centre organised on a religious and co-operative basis. The Chidakashis follow the teaching of Swami Hemraj—which are not very much different from the Vedantic teachings. The lectures of Swami Ram Tirath take the reader veritably into "The woods of God-realization" which is the title of his lectures.

There have been eminent thinkers and men of saintly life who have founded societies which inculcate ethical principles without mentioning God at all. The Dev Samaj founded by Pandit Agnihotri (now called Dev Bhagwan) claims to be a "Science-grounded religion" rejecting faith in God, and accepting only the conclusions arrived at by science. This Samaj has done a notable work of reform and social service, (specially in the field of education), in the Punjab and Sind.

Among the Muslims, the names of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, founder of the Aligarh College (subsequently turned into a University), and of Sir Muhammad Iqbal, the famous poet who wrote the *Secret of Self*, are those of men who could see far into the distance, and who infused a new

energy in their compatriots and gave a new orientation to their activities by bringing home to them the beauty of Islam and at the same time introducing reforms in Islamic society in India. They defended "Islam from what are held to be unjustifiable attacks by Christian critics," and showed that "the reforms which are taking place in muslim society, under the pressure of Christian teaching, western education, and economic changes are not at all at variance with the real Islam, but are rather in complete harmony with it." The society formed in Lucknow, in 1890, under the name of Nadwat-ul-Ulama, established a College called Dar-ul-Ulum for the training of religious



senger of Gd."

"Along with the development of these intellectual rationalizing tendencies in the Muslim community, a wholly new sect arisen, which centres round the person and teaching of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. The movement represents reaction to the naturalistic interpretations of Islam as set forth by the Aligarh reformers, while at the same time repudiating the authority of the orthodox *mullahs*. Over against the claims of both, Mirza sets his own personal claims to be the correct interpreter of Islam for the present age, to which he brings a new message.....

"Ahmad sought to base his claims on the Muslim prophecies concerning the appearance of the Messiah at the end of the world, the Imam Mahdi, whom Muslims look for at the approach of the last day. The Jews still look for the coming of the Messiah and Christians and Muslims anticipate His second coming. Further, he maintained that the scriptures of the Zoroastrians, the Hindus, and Buddhists all prophesied the coming of a great World Teacher. So Ahmad began to declare himself as the one in whom the hopes of all peoples and nations were to be fulfilled. Further, he insisted that, in keeping with the Islamic tradition that God is supposed to send a special individual to be a 'renewer' (*mujaddid*) to restore the faith of Islam at the beginning of each century, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad had all the divine marks of being the *mujaddid* for the fourteenth century of the Islamic era." (Titus).

The Zoroastrians or the Parsis have so many beliefs and ceremonies the same as those of the Hindus that it is easy to understand that the two were at one time believers in the same ancient faith. The essential teaching of Zoroastrianism is that there are two spirits

(both created by the Lord), one the good spirit and the other the evil spirit ; the evil spirit must be kept off. This can be done best through *service of humanity*. One must always help in the advancement and evolution of the world. Perfect life can be led by following the threefold commandment of Good Thought, Good Word and Good Deed.

Christianity in India has produced its Sadhus and Saints the best known of these names being that of the mystic Sadhu Sunder Singh, and that of that servant of humanity Dinabandhu C. F. Andrews, the friend and co-worker of Tagore and Gandhi, who truly identified himself with the Indian people and lives in their hearts. It is perhaps easier in India to follow Christ's Sermon on the Mount than in Christian Europe ; all honour to those who like Father Elwin have given up their all to bring illumination and happiness to the aboriginal races in India, steeped in poverty and ignorance.

derations of prestige or power would keep him from acknowledging his mistakes and blunders if he realises that he has erred. His life has been a life of "Experiments with Truth."

Mahatma Gandhi has forged the novel and startling weapon of Satyagraha or Passive Resistance (literally "following of Truth") to combat the mighty forces of Imperialism and Greed. He took his countrymen in Africa from the Slough of Despond and made them fight a just fight for self-respect—and he did this by absence of hate or violence. The same weapon he has used in his fight against the British Imperialism in India.

His greatest piece of work for his countrymen has not been that of a politician but that of a social and religious reformer. He has championed the cause of the Depressed classes and done more than any one else to abolish the curse of untouchability in India. His heart bled at the sight of his naked starving countrymen and he voluntarily took up the life of a "naked Fakir," a life of renunciation. When he introduced the *Charkha* or spinning wheel cult in India, wisacres laughed at him. Now the Charkha has become a holy symbol of a great movement in favour of simplicity, sanctity of manual work, and social service. In the educational field, too, Mahatma Gandhi has been a radical reformer, his aim being to turn a nation of "clerks" into really capable and cultured men.

This great Indian sage has given to the world the doctrine of Ahimsa or Non-Violence and shown to it that "Indian has a mission for the world."

Gandhi is the incarnation of the Soul-Force which has been the sustainer of Indian civilisation and culture through the ages, and his mere existence in this age supplies an answer to those who wonder how India has survived when all other ancient nations and civilizations have gone the way of destruction and oblivion.

## CHAPTER 8

## INDIAN WOMEN.

'Indian Women, like the Indian Sages, have shed undying lustre over their country. The memory of these peerless Indian heroines, celebrated in song and history, imparts a faith and comfort to the Indian of our day—in his degradation and servitude—which perhaps nothing else gives in the same measure. No other country in the world can produce such shining examples of purity, delicacy, rectitude, chastity, sincerity, love and sacrifice, and it is no

Peerless He-  
roines.

exaggeration to state that the highest flights of the imagination of poets and novelists in other lands have not been able to reach the heights of virtue and excellence to which countless daughters of India have attained in the past and even in our own times. The Persian poet, after exhausting the vocabulary at his command in trying to depict the love that is perfect, had simply to make a mention of the Indian *Sati* or *pativrata*, and his readers and hearers required no other description or explanation: "Verily, it is not given to every moth to burn itself alive at the candle in the assembly or hall," but for the Indian Woman such a sacrifice or consummation is nothing marvellous.

It is no wonder that to those who have not had an intimate knowledge of India and her daughters stories of Indian heroines should appear to be figments of imagination. The most striking types of womanhood known to the literature of Europe are either Helens and Cleopatras, or Imogens and Griseldas i.e. either fascinating sorceresses or types of patience and fidelity which provoke scepticism and may even raise a sneer or laughter. Such immortal heroines as Sita and Savitri, Damayanti and Gandhari, Padmuni and Ahalyabai, are outside the ken of those who

are not conversant with the story of India. A French writer has referred to the difficulty experienced by foreigners in giving credence to the existence of heroines like Sita and Damayanti: "The existence of the two princesses of whom we are speaking, is not certain, someone will say perhaps. The question is to understand one another. Their individual existence at a given moment precisely according to the legend.....*mon Dieu*, let it be so. Each one may dispute that at his will. But their general existence.....to call *that* in question is impossible. It is *that* which is wanted. Neither designed—neither dreamt of even by the Greeks or by the Romans, who had never risen to such heights; neither suspected, we say by Homer or even by Virgil; feminine types of such elevation, such delicacy, such purity of sentiment, could not have been conceived any more by the great Sanskrit epic writers; if these had not met on the banks of the Ganges, what did not exist either by the shores of the Meles or of the Tiber; if these had not found in the Hindu society of their time the necessary lineaments and colours to compose and describe similar figures. To believe the contrary is to stupidly forget that man does not possess the power of the Supreme Author, and that he could not, like the Creator, make something out of nothing. Such inventors, we might say, would be more astonishing than their heroines" (Guerrier de Dumast in *Fleurs de l'Inde*).

Clarisse Bader, from whose *Women in Ancient India* the above quotation is taken, grows enthusiastic as she speaks of the Indian woman in ancient India or the Aryan times: "The wife! The wife in ancient India! With what a shining aureole is she crowned there! From the hymns of the Veda to the elegies of Vikramaditya's contemporaries, what productions of Sanskrit literature have not celebrated her! Such names as Sita, Damayanti

Women in Ancient India.

Savitri, heroines of conjugal tenderness, have inspired the epic poets with their most living creations. What were the customs and the laws which developed the admirable types and prepared the acts of devotion revealed to us in their sublime delicacy in the Ramayana and Mahabharata? The religious rights of woman amongst the Aryans testified to the elevated rank which she occupied in the Vedic family. The titles of chief, *pati*, of master of the house, *grihapati*, attributed to the husband, expressed not tyranny but protection and the wife, she, also, called *patni*, *grihapatni*, shared with her husband the privileges of an authority of which he only spared her the dangers. Her functions, indeed, did not call her to those fields of battles where civilization clashed with barbarism, and where the Arya preluded the conquest of India; but it was she who, before the battle, offered the warrior the ambrosia drunk alike by gods and heroes. In those ancient times, woman appeared as the worthy companion of the hero, and the Arya excited himself to valorous deeds by the thought of her who after the victory would proudly lean on his victorious arm.

"Maternity alone completed wifehood; and a mother was an object of veneration. As Manu [the Hindu Law-giver] reflected upon the sufferings and abnegation of the mother, he raised her even above the father: 'A mother,' he said, 'is more to be revered than a thousand fathers.' The sentiment that dictated to him this profound and touching idea, often animated the poets. The Hindu, keenly feeling the pure and holy joys dwelling in conjugal love, understood with the same delicacy that other love, the most divine of all—maternal love. None better than he knew how to describe actions so august in their artless simplicity, those irresistible movements of tenderness, that ineffable enthusiasm, which devotion to her child inspires in woman." (Adapted)

All foreign observers have not, of course, paid so unstinted tributes to the position of women in India. Many have taken delight in pointing out the tyranny practised upon women in India, and the degrading customs which have corroded and corrupted the life of so many members of the gentler sex. It has been shown at length that the Hindu woman, by the injunction of their lawgiver, was rendered subject to the authority of one or the other male member of the family, all her life—the father, or the husband, or the son.....—and that she was never free or untrammelled in her actions. Much has been written on the *purdah* system and the immurement of women in India within the four walls of their homes, or behind a thick veil. Great stress has been laid on child marriages in India, and the cruelty perpetrated upon the Hindu widow in being debarred from marrying a second time. The practice, long current in India, of women of noble families burning themselves up on the funeral pyre of their deceased husbands (the practice of *Suttee*), has been condemned by a thousand tongues. More eloquent, still, has been the condemnation of the usage by which certain women were dedicated to temples and idols and virtually relegated to the fate of a courtesan.

There is no need to defend these obvious malpractices and barbarities. But it is necessary to state here that such cruelties and outrages on the weaker sex were not confined to India only, and that further, they were not at all warranted by the best Indian traditions and beliefs. As Dr. A. S. Altekar has shown: "In early times proprietary rights of women were recognised very tardily in almost all civilizations. This was the case specially in patriarchal societies. For a long time there was no question of the woman holding any property; she herself was an item in the moveable property of husband or the

patriarch. This was the case among the Teutons. The Frisians used to give their women and children in payment of their taxes to Rome, when they had no other means to discharge their liabilities. At home the husband could sell his wife in early times. During the feudal age in Europe women could no doubt inherit and hold even landed property. This was, however, a nominal right. Women were really pawns in the hands of kings. When in his Spanish campaigns a number of his noblemen died, Charlemagne immediately married their widows to the barons of his own choice. Whether the widows concerned wanted to marry, and if so, whether they had approved of the proposed new husbands, was a matter which he did not stop to enquire. Women were a sort of vitalised deed of conveyance. It was taken for granted everywhere that women as such can have no rights and privileges. They were inherently inferior to men and therefore must be always subordinate to them. This was the case, for instance, in ancient Greece; as a writer has trenchantly put it, 'There was no woman question at Athens because all women were as mere vegetables, and there was no woman question at Sparta because both men and women there were little better than animals.' The archaic Roman law granted to the husband the power over the life and the limbs of the wife, and for many centuries matrons with several children continued to be under the tutelage of their male relations. In ancient Palestine the woman was a piece of property to be bought and sold." (Adapted from *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation*). Even in the nineteenth century Englishmen could legally chastise their wives with corporal punishment, and the readers of Hardy's *Tess* need not be reminded that until comparatively late times wives in England could be sold or exchanged by their husbands, if they so chose—if not legally, at least by an accepted usage.



In ancient India, there were neither child marriages nor *purdah* women. In those days women "used to move freely in society, often even in the company of their lovers. At social and religious gatherings they occupied a prominent position. Women had an absolute equality with men in the eye of religion; they could perform sacrifices independently and were not regarded as an impediment in religious pursuits. Marriage in fact was a religious necessity to both the man and the woman; neither could reach heaven without being accompanied by his duly married consort. The position of the wife was an honoured one in the family. In theory she was the joint owner of the household with her husband, though in actual practice she was the subordinate partner. In rich and royal families polygamy prevailed to some extent, but ordinarily monogamy was the rule. If a wife had the misfortune to be widowed, she had not to ascend her husband's funeral pyre. The Sati custom was not in vogue at all; the widow could, if she liked, contract another marriage, either regularly or under the custom of Niyoga." (Altekar).

The degraded or inferior position of the Hindu woman is an innovation of the last thousand years. Men were once Honoured. or so, and is not sanctioned by the Vedas. Yajñ Manu, who has been regarded as condemning women to a position of inferiority or surveillance, has plenty of texts which evince the high regard in which women were held in India of old. It is Manu who tells us that wherever women are honoured the gods are pleased, and that where they are not honoured all the religious observances become null and void. He goes further and says that in families where due homage is not paid to the women, the curses of the unhappy females send the whole house to perish entirely, as if annihilated by a magic sacrifice. Married women, according to Manu, must be honoured with presents and deferential regard by their fathers,

thers and husbands and by the brethren of their husbands, "these desire abundant prosperity." This chivalrous ideal is maintained by the injunction: "Do not strike, even with a flower, a wife guilty of a hundred faults." Without the wife's cooperation no sacrifice or ceremony has any efficacy: Rama had to set up a statue of his exiled wife in order to fulfil the ceremonial sacrifice he was holding. It is remarkable that in India it is always the Motherland which claims the love of the children of the soil and not the Fatherland as in several other countries, and that the deities of learning, wealth and power are females and not males. In the conjunction of the names of gods and goddesses, the name of the goddess or female deity takes precedence over the male counterpart. The Indian will always say "Sita Ram" and not "Ram Sita", "Radha Krishna" and not "Krishna Radha".

The uniqueness of the Indian woman consists in the spiritual significance of her relationship with her *pati*, her lord or husband. Milton's line, "He for God only the for God in him," is truly understood and realised in practice only by the Indian woman. To her the husband, whoever and whatever he be, is God in person. By

Spiritual Significance. becoming *Pativrata* or a wife who never even in her thought thinks of another person and devotes herself to her husband she attains to salvation: man has to perform religious austerities and to do a thousand acts of devotion before he can realise God and effect his liberation from the round of births and deaths. It is difficult for a civilization or a generation accustomed to the promiscuous contact of the sexes, and habituated to notions such as Trial Marriage, Free Love, and Companionate Marriage, to realise the divine purity, devotion, and chastity of Indian women. It is not necessary for the Indian woman to burn herself alive with the corpse of her hus-

band to be a *Sati*, the ideal, chaste wife. Every minute of her life she sacrifices herself for her husband and his children and relatives: the institution of the joint Hindu family, for instance, has become possible only through the self-abnegation and devotion of the Hindu woman who merges herself in the life of her husband and his family as soon as she enters the portals of her husband's house. The capacity of the husband to provide maintenance for the wife, or to consummate his marriage with her, and such other things, have nothing to do with the loyalty or devotion of the wife. There is no reciprocal relationship or element of contract in the duty which a Hindu woman owes to her husband. As soon as a woman is betrothed i. e. takes on the "name" of her husband, she has no other thought or aspiration save to think, live and die for him. Women accustomed to meat diet very often give up eating carnivorous food as soon as they learn that their future husband is a vegetarian. The wife of the blind Dharatrashtya covered her eyes with a bandage all her life and voluntarily carried darkness and night with her until her dying day. Flirting may be a pastime, an innocent pastime, in other countries and with other races. But the typical Hindu woman would die rather than suffer the pollution of contact with bodies other than that of her husband, like that Rujput woman who, when her hand was grasped by her giddy brother-in-law, took out her blade and cut off the polluted fingers, telling her companion that she had refrained from plunging the weapon into his heart as she did not want her sister to become a widow, and that she had preferred to cut off the besmirched members of her own body!

To the *Sati* or *Patorata* woman the Indian attributes supernatural powers and believes that neither gods nor men can escape the exercise of her powers if she chooses to make use of them. The general belief is that in spite



king of Kandhar, who, betrothed to Dhratrashtira, blind king, put a bandage to her eyes that she might not enjoy the blessings of the sight to which her lord was a stranger, and kept to her resolve, standing always for justice and righteousness even when her son's interests were at stake. When her wicked son Duryodhana asked her blessing she simply replied: "Yato dharmah tato jayah" i.e. Victory to the side that is righteous, and did not put her all-powerful spiritual merit to tilt the scales in favour of her unrighteous children. Damayanti is another shining Immortal. At her *Swayamvara*, or the husband-choosing gathering, she chose a mortal, Nala, to be her husband, in preference to the gods who coveted her hand, and when Nala, maddened by a supernatural force, gambled his all and lost all and nobody would give him food or clothing she clung to him, sharing her piece of cloth with him; then Nala cut the common garment while she was asleep and deserted her. But she remained true to her husband: "always she wore but half a veil, never would she use ornaments," and kept her search for her husband. Skilfully she discovered the whereabouts of her husband by sending out messengers with a song whose significance none but Nala could know. When she knew where Nala was she as skilfully made him come to her place by the ruse of another *Swayamvara*, and so got him back. Voices from heaven attested to her chastity and fidelity, and Nala went back with her and won his kingdom back.

The Rajput women of India deserve not one volume but several volumes to chronicle their greatness, valour and virtue. Tod's *Annals of Rajasthan* contain many a thrilling and inspiring tale of the chastity and sacrifice of Rajput women, who, rather than sully their honour, put themselves to the sword and burnt

themselves alive. These women fought in the field like the bravest warriors and kept up their own courage and that of their husbands and relations when the heaviest odds were ranged on the opposite side. Some of them even shamed their recreant husbands into courage and patriotism. One of these queens shut the gates of her fort upon her husband when he fled from the battlefield. She refused to believe that her husband could have "shown his back," and said that he must have died. He could never return alive as a craven: some impostor must have personified him. The world's romances pale in comparison with the well-authenticated stories of the Rajput heroines. Two of the most famous of these heroines were Sanjogta, the bride of Prithvi Raj, the last Hindu King of Delhi, who chose this hero for her husband even though her father was his mortal enemy, and sent word to him to carry her away, thus precipitating the fatal quarrel which threw India in the arms of the Muslim invader. The most famous name among the Rajput heroines is that of the beautiful Padmini, the queen of Chitor, whose beauty, seen in a mirror, maddened the sensual Alauddin Khilji, Emperor of Delhi. The lustful monarch treacherously entrapped the husband of Padmini and consented to release him only if the Queen consented to become his. The gallant Padmini seemingly yielded to these terms and by a ruse got her husband from the clutches of his captor: the palanquins that were supposed to contain her and her retinue, contained, instead, veteran Rajput warriors instead. Then Alauddin gathered all his forces and marched on Chitor. When more than three-fourths of the defenders had been killed and there was no hope to save Chitor, except by surrender of her person to the embraces of Alauddin.

but save their souls from ignominy. When Alauddin entered Chitor he found only ashes where he expected to win a lovely Rajput bride !

It is not only by passive virtues of courage and fidelity that Indian women have risen to their prominent position in the history and literature of the world. The names of

In Action.

Gargi and Maitreyi, Lilavati and Saraswati (who had a debate with Shankaracharya) are known to those who are interested in the cultivation of learning and pursuit of philosophy, while figures of heroic Queens like the Muslim Queen of Ahmednagar, Chandbibbi, who defied the picked troops of the great Akbar and taught them an unforgettable lesson, or of Queen Durgavati who died fighting against the Mogul troops but not until she had despatched the Mogul General to his death, or Ahalya Bai of blessed memory who was a mother and a goddess to the people (of Indore) over whom she ruled, and left an imperishable name by her philanthropy and administrative genius, or the heroic Queen of Jhansi, Indian Joan of Arc, one of the world's outstanding names in patriotism and bravery, are a witness to the surpassing worth and capacity for action, of Indian women. The mothers of great Indians have invariably been great heroines, only they have never courted the light of publicity or sought blatant advertisement and puffery. The names of Devi Sarda Sundari mother of Keshub Chunder Sen, or of the Holy Mother who lived as a virgin all her life in the service of Ramakishna Paramhansa, who married her, will command the homage of generations unborn even like Sahib Kaur, the revered Mother of the proud Khalsas. Students of twentieth century Indian politics and social reform need not be reminded of the part played in the building of New India by Indian women like the mother of Ali Brothers, Ramabai Ranade and Kasturbai Gandhi.

## CHAPTER 9.

## ARTS AND SCIENCES IN INDIA.

India's chief contribution to the world is the *Wisdom* manifested in the life and teachings of her Sages (or *rishis*). But that does not mean that in secular learning, or in the arts and crafts, or in practical knowledge and the sciences, India has not had a glorious record. It is India's proud claim that while she has remained "a nation of philosophers" and fixed her gaze upon the Infinite and the Eternal, she has given a lead in the domain of the arts and the sciences as well.

There is one broad difference between the Indian literary man or craftsman or artist or scientist and his compeers in other lands: the Indian conceives of life and all his activities as a whole, and his one endeavour is to reach in all his actions the source of all life; therefore there is a *spiritual* aim present in everything that he does or creates. Indian "art is spiritual and intuitive — there is no ignoring or getting over that fact. Reason corrects and transcends the senses; in the same way intuition corrects and transcends reason. Indian art does not scorn natural accuracy or sensuous beauty and delight but it cannot and will not stop there. It hears the call of the soul and realises it and comes out and builds in beauty what is seen in bliss. To the supreme Indian artist, vision is the chief thing, and tune and colour are but adjuncts and accessories. To him aesthetic suggestion is secondary to spiritual realisation; form is but a vehicle for spiritual emotion; it passes not from technique to idea, but to technique from idea; it desires to be an aid and ministrant primarily to meditation and secondarily to sensuous pleasure. Indian architecture, sculpture, and painting are spiritual epics in stone and marble, and



colour. Each has the same unity in diversity, the same soaring into the realm of the spirit, the same suggestion of strength in reserve. Each is a miniature reproduction of some rich and rare fragment of cosmic variety informed and sustained and illumined by divine unity. The appeal of the Indian art is not to the eye and to the mind through the eye but to the soul through the eye and the mind. Its effort has always been to combine decorative abundance and spacious unity. India has never been content with the minor realities of sensation and major realities of emotion but has striven to find the supreme realities of the spirit. She has not scorned pictorial imitations of nature. But she has tried to come into the gardens of life from the central shrine and not merely gone into the gardens of life from the desert spaces of life. India has never cared for mere realistic art.

"The most important note of Indian art is its suggestion of the spiritual and the infinite. This is done by a subtle symbolism. We must at the same time be on our guard against an indiscriminate use of the theories of symbology and allegory. Some modern critics speak in one breath of yogic vision and in the next breath of symbolism and allegory. The one is a human realisation; the other is a human creation. In Indian art the divine forms and actions are visioned truths and realised realities and not merely symbolical and allegorical representations." (Adapted from Ramaswami Sastri's *Hindu Culture*).

Another noteworthy characteristic is the absence of hurry and of competition and motives of personal gain in the Indian artist and scientist. What has been said of the Indian Craftsman in Dr. A. K. Coomarswamy's book of that name is generally true of the Indian artist, artisan, and scientist as well: "Living in a society organised on the basis of

Absence of hurry and competition; a life of dedication.

personal relations and duties, which descended in each family from generation to generation, instead of belonging to a society founded on contract and competition, their payment was provided for in various ways, of which money payment was the least important and most unusual..... (There is) in the India museum an engraved jade bowl, on which a family in the employ of the Emperors of Delhi was engaged for three generations. In these days when churches are built by contract and finished to the day or week, it is difficult to realise the leisurely methods of the older craftsmen. Do not mistake leisure for laziness; they are totally and entirely different things. The quality of *leisure* in old work is one of its greatest charms, and is almost essential in a work of Art. Haste and haggling have now almost destroyed the possibility of art, and until they are again eliminated from the craftsman's work it will not be possible to have again such work as he once gave to his fellows.....The Indian craftsman conceives of his art, not as the accumulated skill of ages, but as originating in the divine skill of *Visvakarma* [God of the arts and crafts], and revealed by him. Beauty, rhythm, proportion, idea have an absolute existence on an ideal plane, where all who seek may find. The reality of things exists in the mind, not in the detail of their appearance to the eye.....Under such conditions, the craftsman is not an individual expressing individual whims, but a part of the universe, giving expression to ideals of eternal beauty and unchanging laws, even as do the trees and flowers whose natural and less ordered beauty is no less God-given." The Indian craftsman learns his craft from his father or some relative as a part of his heritage, and his relation to his teacher is that of an affectionate disciple and not of a pupil who has contracted to pay so much fees for so many hours' lectures every week. There is a serenity or dignity in the life of the

Indian craftsman and artist which is noteworthy: "He knows nothing of the desperate struggle for existence which oppresses the life and crushes the very soul out of the English working man. He has his assured place, inherited from father to son for a hundred generations, in the national church and state organization; while Nature provides him with everything to his hand, but the little food and less clothing he needs, and the simple tools of trade...this at once relieves him from an incalculable dead weight of cares, and enables him to give to his work, which is also a religious function, that contentment of mind, and leisure, and pride and pleasure in it for its own sake, which are essential to all artistic excellence." (Birdwood),

Dr (Sir) J. C. Bose, who showed by his marvellous investigations on plants that all life is one, and who refused to make personal gain by patents and inventions, is typical of the Indian artist-scientist and his essentially *religious* and non-competitive (or non-grabbing) aims and ideals.

Literature and learning have never ceased to flourish in India. Apart from the sacred scriptures of the Hindus, reference to which has been made in a previous chapter, there were numerous works composed in the Sanskrit language as well as the popular Pali and Prākṛit in all the departments of literature and learning. Professor Max Muller said; "The number of Sanskrit works of which

Mss are still in existence amounts to ten thousand. This is more, I believe, than the whole classical literature of Greece

and Italy put together." In one department of literature i. e. that of story writing, India has led the way for the world; Indian stories, fairy tales and fables have furnished originals for the story writers in the Arabic and in the

European languages. Macdonell observes: "India presents a soil particularly favourable to the invention of fables, animal stories, and fairy tales. For here we find the belief in transmigration, which effaces the difference between the human and the animal worlds, and which thus renders it quite natural for animals to be the heroes of stories. Consequently no other country has produced so extensive a literature of stories as India. Thus not only single Indian tales but whole story books are to be found in foreign literatures. We can very often even trace actual routes by which fables and fairy tales have made their way from India throughout the world." The *Panchatantra* collection of stories was translated in Arabic and Persian under the title of *Kalila and Dimna* and became the source book of popular tales in all the European languages. The *Twenty Five Tales* of Betala or "ghost infecting cemeteries" has also "contributed many stories to world literature," as also the *Seventy Tales of a Parrot*. The famous *Arabian Nights' Entertainments* owes many of its tales to these and other Indian originals. Besides these tales there were a number of prose romances in the pre-Muslim period, the most famous of which are Dandin's prose romances, Bana's historical romance on the life of King Harsha, the romance called *Kadambari*, and the story of Nala and Damayanti. The *Jataka* tales in Pali dealt with the stories of the Buddha's previous births.

In the field of Drama, the name of Kalidasa stands as one of the greatest dramastists of the world. *Shakuntala* (or "The Lost Ring") of Kalidas evoked from Europe's greatest writer of the nineteenth century (Goethe) a most sincere and gushing tribute:

Wouldst thou the young year's blossoms and the  
fruits of its decline,

And all by which the soul is charmed, enrapture  
 feasted, fed?

Wouldst thou the earth and heaven itself in one  
 sole name combine

I name thee, O Shakuntala ! and all at once is said

Kalidas wrote at least two other notable plays, namely *Vikramorvashi* and *Malavikagnimitra* (The story of Malavika and Agnimitra). Bhavabhuti, the author of *Malati-Madhava*, was another great dramatist whose plays have been praised warmly by all the readers. It has been said, "It is impossible to conceive language so beautifully musical or so magnificently grand as that of the verses of Bhavbhuti and Kalidas." (Wilson).

Here are some of the other well-known plays :

*Mrichukatika* (Toy-Cart) by Sudraka, *Ratnavali* (Jewel-necklace) and *Naganānda* (Joy of the snake-world) by Sriharsha, *Hanuman-nataka* (Play about Hanuman, the monkey-god), *Karpur-manjari* (Rajasekhara's comedy in the Prakrit language), and the allegorical play in glorification of the cult of Vishnu, the *Prabodha-Chandrodaya* (Rise of the Moon of knowledge) by Krishnamisra.

To speak of the lyric : "The Hindu lyric surpassed that of the Greeks in admitting both the rhyme and blank verse" (Heeren). It is only necessary to mention the names of Kalidasa, Bhartrihari, and Jayadev in this connection. In *Meghaduta* or Cloud Messenger of Kalidasa "the theme is a message which an exile in Central India sends by a cloud to his wife in the Himalayas. The sight of a dark cloud moving northward at the approach of the rainy season fills him with yearning and suggests the thought of entrusting to this aerial envoy a message of hope to his wife in his mountain home. In the first half of the poem the exile delineates with much

power and charm the various scenes to be traversed by the cloud on its northward course. In the second half he describes the beauties of his home and mount Kailasa, and then the loveliness, the occupations and the grief of his wife. The following is a stanza of his message :

In creepers I discern thy form ; in eyes of  
startled hinds thy glances ;  
And in the moon thy lovely face ; in peacock's  
plumes thy shining tresses ;  
The sportive frown upon thy brow in following  
water's tiny ripples ;  
But never in one place combined can I, alas !  
behold thy likeness."  
(Macdonell).

In his lyric *Cycle of the Seasons*, Kalidasa gives a poetical description of the six seasons into which the Indian year is divided, and appropriate love-scenes. Bhartrihari wrote a hundred stanzas on Love "in graceful and meditative verse". The *Gita Govinda*, describing the "love of Krishna for the beautiful Radha, their estrangement, and final reconciliation" or as another puts it, "the love of Radha for the dark God Krishna," is one of the supreme love-lyrics in all literature, and is also an "allegory of the soul striving to pierce through the bondage of the senses and find rest."

The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* have overshadowed the rest of Indian epics and epic poetry, but there were several epics produced in imitation of these masterpieces as well as on different lines (e.g. "Court epics"). Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsha* celebrates the actions of Rama and his ancestors, while his *Kumar-Sambhava* describes the courtship and wedding of the God Shiva and his consort Parvati. Another epic describes the story of King Nala.

Two works occupy a peculiar place of importance and prestige in Indian literature and learning—the *Manu Smriti* or the Code of Manu and the *Grammar* of Panini. Monier Williams, who was obsessed with the notion that Christianity was the only *true* religion and all other religions of the world were false, says of the Code of Manu: "This well-known collection of laws and precepts is perhaps the oldest and most sacred Sanskrit work after the Veda and its Sutras.....Even if not the oldest of Post-Vedic writings, it is certainly the most interesting, both as presenting a picture of the institutions, usages, manners, and intellectual condition of an important part of the Hindu race at a remote period, and as revealing the exaggerated nature of the rules by which the Brahmans sought to secure their own ascendancy, and to perpetuate an organized caste-system in subordination to themselves. At the same time it is in other respects perhaps one of the most remarkable books that the literature of the whole world can offer, and some of its moral precepts are worthy of Christianity itself". The Code of Manu is, of course, not the only Law Book or Dharma-Shastra of the Indians; there are many other Law Books, by Yajnavalkya, and others.

The *Grammar* of Panini "has filled all western scholars who have studied it with admiration," and has been called "perhaps the most original of all productions of the Hindu mind." The book contains eight lectures, each of which is sub-divided into four chapters, the entire work consisting of 3996 Sutras or Aphorisms. These Aphorisms are a marvel of condensation. Panini's grammatical rules "are expressed with algebraic brevity." So perfectly has Panini treated his subject that some of the modern scholars thought his system "treated many roots and forms as existent that did not actually occur in the language, and that he had an inadequate knowledge of

the Vedas", "but this view has been refuted" (Macdonell). Panini is easily the most celebrated grammarian the world has seen, and he has amply demonstrated that the language about which he wrote is the most perfect of all the languages. His work has been supplemented by Katyayana, and by Patanjali, the author of the *Mahabhasya* or the great commentary. There are plenty of dictionaries and grammars which treat of the Classical Sanskrit as well as the popular forms of this divine language, but none of these works can even distantly match the masterpiece of Panini in accuracy, learning and comprehensiveness.

The ancient literature of India contains books and learned treatises on almost all subjects of human inquiry, including erotics. The *Kamashastra* treats of the art of Love and sexual matters and is a book studied by ethnologists and writers on sexual science even in our own times. This manual of Love "has a close connection with the writers of *Kavya*" or metrical verse, "for its study is enjoined on these poets, and the manuals of poetics contain many sections that touch upon the subjects in the *Kamashastra*." Perhaps the only department of learning in which the ancients in India were weak was History, or more properly, Chronology. To people engaged in the quest after the Infinite it looked, perhaps, futile to waste their energies in putting down dates and ephemeral events.

But the Indians did not neglect the social sciences, which they grouped under the name of *Arthashastra*, a term which comprehended "practical arts, economics, administration, and especially politics." The most celebrated treatise in this type of literature is the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya, the minister of Chandragupta of the Maurya dynasty. "No work of Indian literature supplies such full information on the political and economic



conditions of ancient India" (Macdonell). The author has been called the Indian Machiavelli because of the unscrupulous methods urged by him for safeguarding the sovereign from the machinations of traitors and enemies of the state.

South India has produced great works in the Dravidian languages over and above the philosophical and religious works in the Sanskrit language. Frazer observes that "it was through the fostering care of Jainas, that the South first seems to have been inspired with new ideals and its literature enriched with new forms of expression." A Jaina ascetic, it is said, composed the four hundred quatrains of *Naladiyar* in which are treated "topics familiar to a student of Sanskrit literature, the misery of transmigration, the effects of Karma, and the joy of release from bondage and rebirth." The masterpiece in South Indian literature is the *Kurar* of the pariah weaver Tiruvalluvar, "a collection of 1330 aphorisms on the three aims of life, in Sanskrit, *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*". The teaching of this poet was eclectic, not being confined to the inculcation or exposition of the doctrines of any one sect.

Another Tamil classic is *Tiruvasagam* (The Sacred Utterance) in which Manikka-Vasagar, "who was an enthusiastic votary of Siva and a bitter opponent of the Jains and Buddhists," gives religious lyrical poetry which moves every heart, it is said, unless it be "a heart of stone":

Choice gems they wore, these softly smiling  
 maids ; I failed, I fell.  
 Lo, thou'st forsaken me. Thou gav'st me place  
 'midst Saints who wept  
 Their beings fill'd with rapturous joys ; in grace  
 did'st make me thine !  
 Show me thy feet, even yet to sense revealed,  
 O spotless One.

The greatest of the South Indians—Shankaracharya—wrote in Sanskrit, so his philosophic commentaries, or the sublime song in which he tersely embodied the philosophy of Advaitism (or Monism), cannot be included in the literature of the Dravidian country.

During the Muslim period India produced learned scholars and choice poets, but as these wrote mostly in the Persian language it is not necessary to recount their names. The one advance that was made in the Muslim era was in the department of History and allied departments of learning. A book like Eliot's *History of India* as related by her own Historians convincingly shows that History was a favourite pursuit of the Muslim scholars in India at a time when this art was not much cultivated in Europe. Books like Abul-Fazl's *Ain Akbari* (which gives a complete idea of the system of administration in Akbar's days) are classics of their kind. In the Muslim period, the scholars generally chose to express themselves in either Sanskrit or the Arabic-Persian languages, with the exception of the mystics and saints who preached and wrote for the masses and employed the vernaculars of the day.

nath Tagore. The National Song *Hindustan Hamar* of Iqbal, is known to almost every Indian, and his Urdu songs and verses have been applauded by all who know that language. Iqbal wrote in Persian "Secrets of Self," which is a splendid philosophical treatise. Dr. Iqbal's view of life is dynamical, and notwithstanding his latter day "Pakistan" views his is one of the greatest names among the awakeners of Muslims in India, and the promoters of the feeling of Indian Nationalism and solidarity.

Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, who died only last year, (1941), symbolised in his long life and multifarious literary work the glories and achievements of the Indian Renaissance. Romain Rolland said of him sometime ago: "He has been for us the living symbol of the spirit of Light and of Harmony—the great free bird which soars in the midst of tempests, the song of Eternity which Ariel makes to vibrate on his golden harp, above the sea of unloosened passions."

Tagore began writing in Bengali his translations, songs, dramas and stories, at an early age, but international fame came to him after he was fifty when he published, in English, translations of his verses under the name of *Gitanjali*, and won the Nobel Prize for Literature (in 1913). No poet has ever surpassed Tagore in versatility of genius and energy of temperament. Not less than 2000 songs of Tagore have been set to music, while the number of stories, plays, and magazine articles from his pen defies mention. And Tagore was not only a poet, but a schoolmaster, physician, instructor in histrionics, painter, musician, agriculturist, calligraphist, rural reconstruction expert, politician, statesman, and a world traveller.

Tagore is certainly one of the greatest lyric poets of the world, his lyrics and songs being characterised by a simplicity, reverence for all life, elevation of sentiment,

and surrender to the Lord, which place him as a poet in a class by himself. The Child poems of Tagore are unsurpassable. Tagore is the heir to the Ancient Wisdom of India and sings of the quest after the Infinite, of the yearning of the Soul for the Absolute as of the gopis for Krishna, of Harmony, and of Love for all mankind and birds and beasts.

. . . . .

and to each was assigned some particular season of the year, time of the day and night or special locality or district, and for a performer to sing a *raga* out of its appropriate season or district would make him, in the eyes of all Hindus, an ignorant pretender and unworthy the character of a musician." (Whitten, quoted by Sarda). These six *ragas* are : *Hindaul*, which brings before the hearer "all the sweetness and freshness of spring;" *Sri Raga*, which affects "the mind with the calmness and silence of declining day;" *Megh Malar*, which has the power of producing rain; *Deepuck*, which is so powerful that it produces fire; *Bhairava*, which inspires "a feeling of approaching dawn, the carolling of birds, the sweetness of the perfume and air, the sparking freshness of dew-dropping morn", and *Malkaus*, whose effect on the mind is that of "gentle stimulation." It is said that in the days of Emperor Akbar startling demonstrations were given of the power of music. The great musician Gopal Naik being commanded by Akbar to sing *Deepuck* he had to obey : he "repaired to the river Jumna, in which he plunged up to his neck. As he warbled the wild and magical notes, flames burst from his body and consumed him to ashes." As for Tansen, the most celebrated musician in the history of Indian music, "he was also commanded by the Emperor Akbar to sing the *sri* or night *raga*, at mid day, and the power of the music was such that it instantly became night, and the darkness extended in a circle round the palace as far as his voice could be heard" (Whitten).

Dr. A. K. Koomaraswamy has remarked about Indian music that "it is a purely melodic art, devoid of any harmonised accompaniment other than a drone. In modern European art, the meaning of each note of the theme is mainly brought out by the notes of the chord which are near with it; and even in unaccompanied melody, the musician heaves an implied melody.....To hear the

Indian music as Indians hear it, one must recover the sense of a pure intonation, and must forget all implied harmonies." South India has kept up the traditions of the ancient Indian music, while in North India the influence of Persian song and music has been great on the classical Indian music, and on the *Ustads* or the masters who practise this art.

In India, music is incomplete without Dance, both being of divine origin. The great Siva is the *Nataraja*, the Master Dancer : "He is shown as a four armed Deity, with braided jewelled hair, stray locks from the lower masses of which whirl in mad abandon with rhythm of the dance. The mermaid form of the sacred Ganges peeps out, with a hooded cobra and a human skull, from the hair of this ancient yogi. The crescent moon is at the top, surmounted by the crowning wreath of cassia leaves. From the right ear hangs a man's ear ring ; from the left a woman's while the other ornaments include necklaces, armlets, anklets and bracelets, finger, and toe-rings and jewelled belt. Of dress he has a pair of right-fitting breeches, a fluttering scarf, and the sacred thread of the twice born. In one right hand is a drum, and the other is lifted in *Abhaya-Mudra*, or the sign of peace and goodwill and perfect assurance to all the mortals. In one left-hand burns the sacred fire, while the other points to the demon Mayalaka, whom the heretic rishis had discharged as their last weapon at the Great God, and whom the latter crushed to the earth with just the tip of his right toe. The left is poised most gracefully in the air." (Woodroffe).

"soft and seductive, suited to the fair sex." The Krishna Lila or the Dance of Krishna with the Gopis, especially with Radha, and the *kirtanas* held in honour of Rama (especially the kirtanas of the divinely inspired South Indian Thyagaraja), and the Malabar *kathakalis*, are some other celebrated specimens of Indian dancing. Folk dances, e. g. the Garba dance, have long been a part and parcel of Indian life.

Unfortunately, the divine arts of music and dancing have come to be associated for several centuries in India with *nautch-girls* or courtezans, professional singers delighting the hearts of princes and rich men with their languorous, abandoned gestures and seductive voice, or with temple-dancers, some of whom are *Deva-Dasis*, girls dedicated from infancy to the worship of the temple-god and bound to be victims to the lust of the *pujaris* or priests. It is a bright sign of the times that men and women of respectable status and unblemished morals are now devoting themselves to these arts, and the temple immoralities are being abolished. Uday Shanker's name has come to be widely known for leading the way in the revival of the art of Dancing.

"The frescoes at Ajanta, Bagh, Sigiria, Sittannavasal, Ellora, Conjeeveram, Tanjore, Tiruvanjikulam, and those at Tirumalaipuram recently discovered by Professor Dubreuil constitute an art gallery" for the intelligent student who would like to study the ancient Indian paintings. The Ajanta paintings have been freely praised. Of the representation of Women in these frescoes, Captain G. Solomon of the Bombay School of Art writes: "The Ajanta Masters use Woman as their best decorative asset with brilliant zest and extraordinary knowledge. Woman is the finest achievement of their art, and obviously its most admired theme...They use woman like flowers, garlands of girls surround their Rajas and their Princes,

embellish their palaces, dominate their street scenes, crowd the windows of their cities, and are often painted, as in the delicious panel in the First Cave of the Queen and her maids giving alms to a mendicant, for the sheer joy of painting them, and with no perceivable literary or religious intention.....As *Apsaras* or radiant Peris they float across the porches ; as Sirens they lure the sailor to his doom; but chiefly they shine for us as mortals, and as mortals these artists depicted them best and most often. They painted them at the toilette, in repose, gossiping, sitting, standing, always with a sort of wonder akin to awe. They did not pose women ; they simply copied their poses." The Hindu paintings are never photographic, and the pictures of men and women are therefore not likenesses, but idealizations of the actual.

Under the Moghuls, Indian Painting had a glorious day. There was the Rajput school of painting, the Persian school of painting, the European school of painting, and we have exquisite specimens of this period of Indian painting in mural decorations and painting of the portraits of princes and courtiers and court scenes. Miniature-painting came to be in vogue, and in Shah Jahan's time it "came to be considered as utterly incomplete, unless a most elaborate and ornamental border of bright-hued flowers, butters and butterflies was deftly woven into the main theme." A difference between the ancient Hindu paintings and the Moghul paintings was that in the latter, often one artist "painted the border and outline, while another did the colouring in the main body of the picture." (K. T. Shah in *The Splendour that was Ind.*)

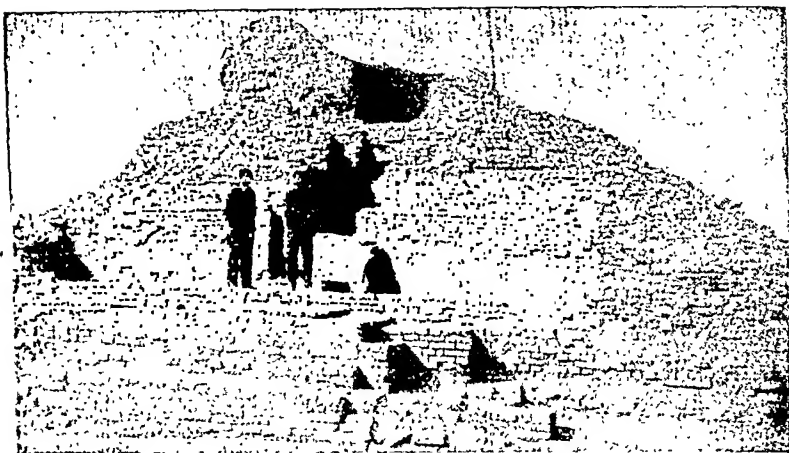
To take sculpture and architecture : Macdonell says that the earliest architectural and plastic religious art of India arose in the first period of Buddhism, and that the Indian sculpture and architecture had their origin in the Buddhist *Stupas* (hemispherical burial-mounds, comme



morative of Buddha, and enclosing relics of the found of the faith) at Sanchi and other places, the Buddhist *Chaityas* (assembly-halls consisting of a nave and of six aisles terminating in an apse or semi-dome), the Buddhist *Viharas* or monasteries (generally consisting of a hall surrounding which are a number of excavated sleeping cubicles), and in the icons or images of Buddha (in which he is shown seated cross-legged, adorned with a halo). Mentioning the two types of architecture in ancient India namely "the Indo-Aryan style" in the North and the "Hindu-Dravidian" in Southern India, Macdonell says: "It can be shown that the Hindu Dravidian temple has been evolved from the Buddhist monastery (*vihara*), while the Indo-Aryan type has been derived from the Buddhist Stupa."

This theory leaves unexplained the discoveries made at Mohen-Jo-Daro in Sind and the excavations at Harappa in the Punjab which takes us to 3300 B. C. "The (Mohen-Jo-Daro) buildings are of well-burnt brick. Sculptures in alabaster and marble include a painted figure of a man, and a much finer bearded head wearing what looks like a wrought metal skull cap decorated in imitation of hair; in terracotta, figurines of a nude goddess with an elaborate headdress, girdle, and the body ornament (*Channavira*) characteristic of later Indian art; in terracotta and in faience, admirable figures of animals, including the bull, rhinoceros, dog and cock. All these are sculptures in the round. But the most abundant and not the least remarkable works of art are the square seals of faience or ivory, which bear in relief figures of animals, usually a bull, elephant or rhinoceros, with a cult object, apparently a wicker crib or manger, and pictographic signs, partly related to early Sumerian forms and even more similar to pre-Sumerian forms found at Kish, but so far undecipherable.....One seal bears a seated cross-legged figure attend.

## MOHEN-JO-DARO EXCAVATIONS.



*The Stupa.*



*Wells showing various civilizations.*

Photos by the late Mr. K. A. Kalani. B. Sc.

ed by snake-hooded Nagas, as in much later, Buddhist art, another a sacred tree (the *pippala*, *Ficus religiosa*) later known as a symbol of various deities, (particularly the Buddha) with a horned dragon projecting from the trunk, another a row of men bearing totem standards like those of predynastic Egypt. One earlier seal from Harappa represents a tiger hunt." (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*). So much for the theory that in pre-Buddhist era there was no architecture worth the name, that men lived either in rock-hewn caves or wooden houses, and that there were no sculptures ! In Bihar, at various places, burial mounds have been discovered dating before the days of Asoka or the period of the stupas, pillars and viharas—and they show sculptures of figures.

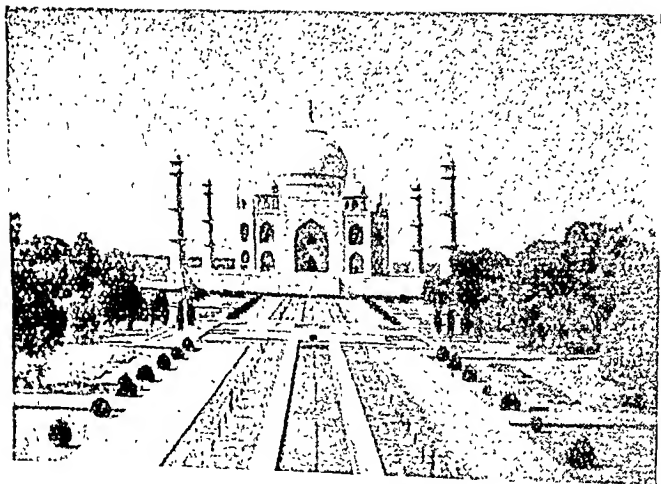
The ancient Indian architecture and sculpture are of course, religious in origin, the characteristic feature of the buildings being the *sikhara* or spherical roof of the Hindu temple (divided into four main parts, the cupola, the pinnacle, the finial and the apex), even as the dome is the characteristic of the Muslim mosque and the steeple of the Christian church. In sculpture the Indian artist devised certain conventions to give the idea of the *Infinite* in his finite art.

The glories of ancient Indian architecture and sculpture may still be seen in the Ellora and Carli caves, the Sarnath and Sanchi stupas, the Dilwara temples at Abu, the rock-temples at Girnar and Palitana, and the temples in South India. Many of the old famous structures have, of course, gone the way of destruction at the hands of Time and the iconoclast.

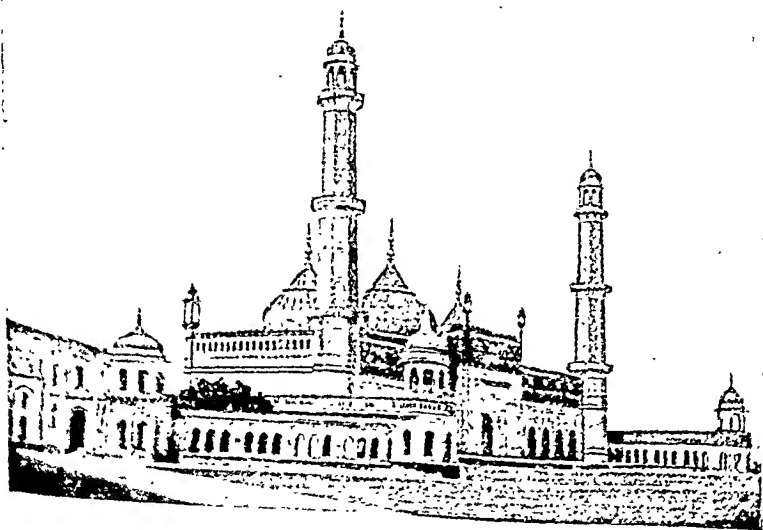
The Muslims, being against idol-worship, would not tolerate, much less encourage the making of stone images or sculptures. But the period of Muslim rule in India saw the rise of a wonderful architecture by the synthesis of the old Hindu art of architecture with Saracen simplicity and

severity. "The principles of dome construction being familiar to the Hindus in the so-called ribbed or bulbous dome or the bell-shaped dome, the mosque or tomb only modified or adapted them when Islam ruled India. While the finial of the pure Arab dome in Egypt or elsewhere is a mere spike, that of the Indian Musalman's dome was the ancient Hindu and Buddhist symbolism of the *Kalasha*, or water-jar, and the *amalaka*, or the lotus-flower." (K. T. Shah)

The tombs, palaces, mosques, that are still to be seen in the Muslim capitals of India—Delhi, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Ahmedabad, Bijapur etc—fill the spectator with admiration and awe. There is nothing in the costliest buildings and structures raised by the British rulers in India which can come up to these magnificent structures in delicacy, beauty, and artistic skill. The greatest memorial of Muslim architecture in India is, of course, the peerless Taj at Agra, ("a tear in marble") raised by Shah Jehan to the memory of his deceased consort Mumtaz Mahal, and acclaimed by every one as one of the wonders of the world. Some have criticised the architecture of the Taj as being "too feminine". To them Havell replies: "Those critics who have objected to the effeminacy of the architecture unconsciously pay the highest tribute to the genius of the builders. The Taj was meant to be feminine. The whole conception and every line and detail of it expresses the intention of the designers. It is Mumtaz Mahal herself, radiant in her youthful beauty, who still lingers on the banks of the shining Jumna, at early morn, in the glowing mid-day sun, or in the silver moonlight. Or rather, we should say, it conveys a more abstract thought: it is India's noble tribute to the grace of Indian womanhood,—the Venus de Milo of the East." Prof. K. T. Shah, while giving this extract from Havell, writes: "Needless to add that



THE TAJ—AGRA.



THE JAMA MASJID—LUCKNOW.

the Taj is entirely Indian in conception and execution from the platform to the dome, with its lotus crown" The same may be said of the other architectural glories of Muslim rule in India—the Fatehpuri-Sikri palace, the Gol Gumbaz at Bijapur, the perforated windows at Ahmedabad...

As for Indian crafts and industries, it is only sufficient

Crafts to mention that five thousand years ago

"finely wrought gold, silver and copper gilt jewellery, chank and camelian beads, faience bangles pottery, wheel-made and painted, and wheeled vehicle were known to the Indians of Mohen-jo-Daro and Harappi civilisations, and that the finest cloth known to the ancient world was called *Sindon* and *Sendal*—from *Sin* the place of its manufacture. The use of glass was known in India long before Europe knew it, and the art of tempering steel was learnt by other people from Indians. It is still a mystery how the iron pillar near Kutub-Minar Delhi was made by Indian workers so that "after an exposure to wind and rain for fourteen centuries it is unrusty and the capital and inscriptions are as clear and sharp now as when put up fourteen centuries ago. The orthodox Indian believes that before the war of the Mahabharata Indians had perfected machines which could take them in the air, and that the modern weapons of war, including the cannon and the tanks, were mysteries to the Indians. Surgical instruments of great delicacy and accuracy were manufactured in India. Until the East India Company destroyed the art of the weaver in India, the Indian textiles, particularly the Dacca Muslins, were the envy and despair of the world. At the International Exhibition of 1852, splendid specimens of gorgeous manufactures and the patient industry of Hindoos were displayed. Textile fabrics of infinite fineness, tapestry glittering with gems, rich embroider

brocades, carpets wonderful for the exquisite harmony of colour, enamel of the most brilliant hue, inlaid wares that require high magnifying power to reveal their minuteness, furniture most elaborately carved, swords of curious form and excellent temper are amongst the objects that prove the perfection of art in India" (Chamber's Cyclopaedia quoted by Har Bilas Sarda). The skilled Indian artisans are languishing for want of state support, and also because of the grinding competition of the mills and manufacturers of the West. But it is not impossible to hope that under better auspices, the Kashmere shawls, Benares cloth, Moradabad metal ware, and Hala lacquer work will again compel the notice and admiration of the world, and be a valuable contribution to the world's arts and crafts. Dr. Bose's famous instrument by which he could measure the heart beats of plants was another proof of the delicacy of touch of the Indian craftsman, the same delicacy which made the Dacca weaver produce a fabric so fine that many yards of it could go through a ring.

At the present time, India is very backward in Science and the mechanical arts, and one of the chief needs of India is more science laboratories and technological institutes. But that should not blind us to the fact that in the pre-Muslim era India was one of the foremost countries in the world in point of scientific knowledge and technical skill. The Arabs learnt sciences and arts from India and carried them to Europe. In Har Bilas Sarda's *Hindu Superiority* there is an able treatment of this subject which has been made use of in the paragraphs given below.

In Mathematics and Astronomy India has led the rest of the world. "The sacrifice (or yajna) was the prime religious avocation of the Vedic Hindus. Each sacrifice had to be made on an altar of prescribed size and shape.....

the greatest care had to be taken to have the right shape and size of the sacrificial altar. Thus originated problems of geometry and consequently the science of geometry. The study of astronomy began and developed chiefly out of the necessity for fixing the proper time for the sacrifice."



were proficient at a time when there was nothing like European civilization. There is sufficient evidence to substantiate the claim of Indians to have been well-versed in Astronomy more than five thousand years ago. The Hindu year was calculated at 365 days, 5 hours, 50 minutes 35 seconds i. e. longer by 1 minute and forty six seconds than the year according to La Callie's observations. This decrease in the year must have taken at least fifty centuries. The Indian astronomers knew the roundness of the earth, its diurnal rotation, the procession of the Equinoxes, etc. and had knowledge of the laws of gravity, before Newton was born. Only a small portion of this knowledge was conveyed by the Arabs to the West. "Indian astronomers were greatly encouraged by the early Khalifs, particularly Harun-al-Rashid and Almamu; they were invited to Baghdad, and their works were translated into Arabic. The Hindus were, fully as much as the Greeks, the teachers of the Arabians." It is believed by some that the European astronomers have not yet discovered certain truths which have made the Indian astrologers wizards in their art right upto the present day. For instance, "a very strange theory of the planetary motion is expounded at the commencement of the *Surya Siddhanta*, Chapter II" which has not yet been known outside India. The modern Indian astrologer blindly follows the texts of old without understanding the profound observations and calculations at the back of those conclusions and statements. The Europeans are not able to understand how the Indian astronomers "heap billions upon millions, trillions upon billions of years reckoning up ages upon ages, aeons upon aeons with even more audacity than modern geologists and astronomers" (Monier Williams). It requires a race devoted to the quest after the Infinite to imagine and take part in such calculations "of measuring infinity". Some moderns quietly dismiss these measurements and

calculations as hyperboles and exaggerations, while others, more reverent, see in them the occult knowledge with which Indians have been credited for thousands of years. The love of Indians for astronomy and astrology, and the science of mathematics, has continued unabated: only two centuries ago Rajputana produced the famous royal astronomer, Raja Jai Singh of Jaipur, whose observatories are still extant, and in our own times we have had the marvelous boy-mathematician, Ramanujan, who astonished the Cambridge mathematicians with his intuitive incursions in "Numbers, Partitions, Elliptic and Modular Functions."

Another science for the development of which the world is deeply indebted to India is that of Medicine. The name of the science in India is *Ayurveda* or "Veda of longevity," and this shows that the medical science was one of the supplements of the fourth Veda, the *Atharva-veda*. As a matter of fact, the practice of medicine is only one of the branches of Ayurveda, the other sections being Surgery and Midwifery, Treatment of eye, ear, nose and throat, Psycho-Therapy, Pediatrics, Toxicology, the Science and Art of restoring health in old age, and sexual Rejuvenation. The practitioner of Ayurveda is required to follow a very high ethical and spiritual ideal: he should carry free medical aid to suffering humanity, never "touch another man's wife even in thought, nor hanker after others' wealth," never commit or abet a sin, and always be gentle, sober, clean and righteous." (*The Cultural Heritage of India*).

17th century was based upon the Arabic, and the name the Indian physician, Charaka, repeatedly occurs in Latin translations of Avicenna (Abu Sina), Rhazes (Abu Ras) and Serapion (Abu Sirabi)." At least 127 sorts of different surgical instruments were invented by the Indian and it was Indian sages "who first understood the necessity of dissection of the human body for the education of physicians and surgeons." In the principles of sanitation and hygiene ancient India was in some ways more advanced than we are at the present day. The sanitation and drainage system of the Mohen-Jo-Daro people has been pronounced to be marvellous, indeed unapproachable. Every house, every lane, had its perfect system of sanitation. "The ancient caste injunctions of the Hindus were based on a belief in the existence of transmissible agents of disease," and the "ancient Hindus used animal vaccination secured by transmission of the small pox virus through the cow" centuries before Jenner. The Muslim rulers of India were great patrons of medicine; a former Governor of Madras said that "we have proofs that the Mughal rulers were great sanitary reformers in the magnificent water works which still exist and perform their functions at various places in the north of India." He said, further, "that the modern plague policy of evacuation and disinfection is not a whit different from that enjoined in ancient Hindu shastras." There are educated people in India who agree with Mrs. Besant's statement: "Indian medicine both of the Hindus and the Mohemadans is superior to the medicine of the West," and when they fall ill call a physician versed either in the Ayurveda or the Unani (Greek) system instead of a doctor practising the allopathic system of medicine. It is a good sign that in some parts of India the public bodies are beginning to encourage the study of the Ayurveda system, as well as of the Unani system (which was introduced in

India in the time of the Muslims.) The Hindu physicians and the Muslim *hakims* have still a great contribution to make in the field of Pharmacology and Pharmacy.

“In India as in other countries, Chemistry has developed mainly as a handmaid to medicine.” The great work of Sir P. C. Ray—*History of Hindu Chemistry*—shows the achievements of ancient India in the field of Chemistry. The Indians knew the art of preparation of drugs, especially those of iron and mercury, the use of alkalies and alkaline caustics, formation of alloys and metallurgy. The cultivation of plants and herbs could only be possible by a proper study of Botany; “the consecration of gardens, a Vedic ceremony, and the dedication of such gardens to gods, and to ascetic fraternities were a prevalent practice during the Buddhist period. Maintenance of these gardens required a scientific knowledge of plants, and they were placed under superintendents.” The Indians in ancient times were well-versed in the knowledge of electricity and magnetism, and as a result they inserted iron and copper rods at the tops of temples, gave to the ailing ones metallic cells to be worn on the diseased parts of the body, sat on seats made of either silk or wool or skins of deer and tiger when prayers had to be offered, and slept with the head either eastward or southward. “The Greeks derived their knowledge of electricity from India.” If the accounts in the *Mahabharata* are to be credited, the Indians were experts in

shapes and with awful sounds." It will be hard for men of these days to believe that five thousand years ago Indians knew the science of aeronautics and gas warfare, but if our civilization comes to be destroyed—as there are chances it may—in a universal holocaust, those coming after us, say, after the lapse of three or four thousand years, may find it impossible to believe in the mammoth structures and death-dealing machines of our days. Indians believe in cycles, and not in a continuous line of progress, and many of them are of opinion that the present dazzling brilliance of the Western Civilization is but the last bright spurt of a dying taper,—or flame, if you prefer to call it so.

#### CHAPTER 10.

### KINGS AND WARRIORS: VALOUR AND CHIVALRY.

India has been ruled for the last two hundred years by a foreign power, and an impression has grown that the Indians, particularly the Hindus, lack Indian Valour courage. Macaulay and others made the title "Bengali Babu" contemptible, and an equivalent for cowardice and cunning. But it is now being realised that it was not lack of courage on the part of her inhabitants which brought India under the sway of the British. It was with the help of Indian soldiers and Indian rulers that the British won the sovereignty of India, and in the last world-war and the present world war Indian soldiers and officers have proved themselves second to none in deeds of valour and military prowess. The Gurkha, the Punjabi Mussalman, the Rajput, the Sikh and the Maratha,—the fighting races of India as they have been called—have distinguished themselves on many a battle-field even within the last two hundred years, and most of these races are Hindus by religion. The Bengalis have

viped off their stigma of sloth, craftiness, and cowardice by a thousand acts of amazing courage. The Time-spirit, or the Providence that shapes the destinies of nations, wanted that India should have intimate and stirring experience of a civilization very different from hers, and the British rule has given India this very much-needed stimulus and awakening. India became too much attached to the things of other world, and paid too little attention to things of this world ; the spirit social or corporate was lost sight of and Speculation put Action out of court. The impact of the West has aroused India to a sense of the realities of life, developed a keen social consciousness, and created a zest for freedom and activity.

It is wrong to state that the study and practice of "Indian Wisdom" induces cowardice or slave-mentality in the Indian people. A proper understanding of the spiritual truths known and expounded by the Indian sages takes away all fear from the mind, and makes a hero

The fearlessness  
of India sages:  
Dandamis.

to be done to God alone "who abhors slaughters and in gates no wars. But Alexander is not God, since he has no taste of death." As for the inducements and threats that have been held out to him, the sage remarked: "Know this, however, that what Alexander offers me, and the gifts he promises are all things to me utterly useless; but the things which I prize, and find of real use and worth, are the forest leaves which are my house, these blooming plants which supply me with dainty food, and the water which is my drink, while all other possessions, and things, which are amassed with anxious care, are wont to prove ruinous to those who amass them, and cause only sorrow and vexation, with which every poor mortal is fully fraught. But as for me, I lie upon the forest leaves, and, having nothing which requires guarding, close my eyes in tranquil slumber; whereas had I gold to guard, that would banish sleep. The earth supplies me with everything, even as a mother feeds her child with milk. I go wherever I please, and there are no cares with which I am forced to cumber myself, against my will. Should Alexander cut off my head, he cannot also destroy my soul. My head alone, now silent, will remain, but the soul will go away to its Master, leaving the body like a torn garment upon the earth, whence also I was taken. I then, becoming spirit, shall ascend to my God, who enclosed us in flesh, and left us upon the earth to prove whether when here below we shall live obedient to His ordinances, and who also will require of us, when we depart hence to His presence, an account of our life, since He is judge of all proud wrong doing; for the groans of the oppressed become the punishments of the oppressors. Let Alexander, then, terrify with these threats those who rush for gold and for wealth, and who dread death, for against us these weapons are both alike powerless, since the Brahmanes (Brahmins) neither love gold nor fear death. I, then, and tell Alexander this: 'Dandamis has no need

of aught that is yours, and therefore will not go to you, but if you want anything from Dandamis come you to him'". Alexander, on getting a report of the interview, "felt a stronger desire than ever to see Dandamis, who, though old and naked, was the only antagonist in whom he, the conqueror of many nations, had found more than his match" (Mc. Crindle : *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian*).

There spoke the voice of Indian Wisdom : "the Bragmanes (Brahmins) neither love gold nor fear death"! The whirligig of Time has not brought anything more ironical to pass in the history of the world than this that the descendants of these fearless sages are now crawling like worms—not for gold or silver, but for a few coppers only—and are being branded as cowards whom the sight of a naked sword or the distant sound of "a rifle in the Khyber Pass" sends into shivers! When the veil of ignorance is lifted, and the Indian is face to face, again, with the truths discovered by his ancestors, he will cast off base fear and abject slave-mentality.

In the pages of the *Mahabharata* and other chronicles of ancient India, kings, warriors and brave ones pass before us in an unending line—men, who like Admiral Nelson, knew not what fear was, and women whose honour no one could dare to besmirch or defile. The greatest hero of the Greeks—Hercules—was an Indian, Balram (the brother of Krishna). Alexander the Great admired the valour of Porus, and his successor was actually defeated by the great Mauryan King, Chandragupta.

"War as an art as well as a science was equally well understood in ancient India. The nation which overran nearly the whole of the habitable globe and produced Hercules, Arjuna, Sagarji, Bali could scarcely be considered inferior to any other people in the proficiency in military science.....Their position in the ancient world being



similar to that of England in the modern world as far as maritime affairs are concerned, their navy, too, was equally eminent and powerful.....Strabo mentions a nava department in addition to the others in the Indian army.' (Sarda).

To the Westerner everything must be related in terms of money or politics, to an Indian everything dissolves into spirituality. Hence Chivalry the valour of Indians has always been characterized by the spiritual quality of chivalry. In India courage and chivalry have gone together : even the Huns abandoned their brutal ferocity and became humane and chivalrous in their Indian environment. Wilson remarks, "The Hindu laws of war are very chivalrous and humane, and prohibit the slaying of the unarmed, of women, of the old and of the conquered." The Indian warriors and kings did not molest the peaceful agriculturists in their pursuits, and in many other ways followed an ethics of war which we find absent in the annals of other lands, including the European countries. There are no atrocities, "concentration camps," wholesale massacres and rapes, to the discredit of those reared in the lap of Indian Wisdom. Not infrequently, warriors, who fought and killed each other the livelong day, repaired to the tents of the foes at evening time to render them service or to have friendly converse. The story of the chivalry of the Saracen monarch, (Saladin) to his sick foe Richard Coeur-de-Lion, whom he visited in the guise of a physician and restored to health and vigour, would be a common episode in the annals of Indian chivalry. In fact, along with Indian cloth and spices, and knowledge of arithmetic and algebra, the Arabs carried chivalry, too, from India to Europe, and became the teachers of Europe, in the Dark Ages, both in science and in chivalry plus humanity. One item in Indian Chivalry could not be transplanted abroad, namely

the institution of *Rakshabandhan* or binding Rakhi or thread by Indian ladies round the wrists of men whom they adopted as brothers and whose loyal, disinterested, and whole-souled services they commanded even though in most instances they never beheld them ; the thread was sent through a messenger. Colonel Tod could not help remarking : "There is a delicacy in this custom, with which the bond uniting the cavaliers of Europe to the service of the fair in the days of chivalry will not compare." In this way a Muslim Emperor, Hamayun, became the *brother* of a Rajput princess, and espoused her cause with all his might. The chivalry of the Indian kings and warriors to all females is unexampled in history. The founder of the Maratha empire, Shivaji the Great, sent back the captive daughter of his foe to her father with all possible honour and gentleness.

It has been noted by the author of *Hindu Superiority* that "the chivalrous character of the Hindu has handicapped him in his fight against his unscrupulous foes. To the advantage derived by the opponents of the Hindus from the latter's mutual jealousies and disunion was added also that of their (Hindu) unwillingness to do anything against the dictates of humanity or the demands of chivalry. Unlike other nations, they do not believe in the maxim, 'everything is fair in love and war'. 'To spare a prostrate foe', says Colonel Tod, 'is the creed of the Hindu cavalier, and he carried all such maxims to excess.' If the chivalrous nature of the latter-day Hindu had only been tempered with political discretion, India would not have suffered the misrule that characterized some of the subsequent reigns. Sultan Shah-dud-din Ghori, when captured by Pirithvi Raj on the field of Tilaori, was liberated and allowed to return to his country, only to come back with a fresh army, and with the assistance of the traitors of Kanauj and Patun and of the Haoh Rao Hamir, to overturn the Hindu

throne of Delhi. Again, when Mahmud, the Ghilzi king of Malwa, was defeated and taken prisoner by the Maharana of Chitor, not only was he set at liberty without ransom, but was loaded with gifts and sent back to Malwa. When during the invasion of Mewar by the Imperial forces of the Emperor Aurangzeb.....the heir apparent of Delhi and his army, cut off from all assistance, were at the absolute mercy of the heir of Mewar, the magnanimous Rajputs, in pursuance of mistaken notions of chivalry and humanity not only spared the whole army, but gave them guides to conduct them by the defile of Dilwara, and escorted them to Chitor. Nay, we learn from the historian Orme, that Aurangzeb himself owed his life to the clemency of the Rajputs."

The race of the Indian Rajputs ("sons of kings") has been peerless in the entire literature and history of the world for deeds of valour and chivalry (which were carried to a quixotic excess in disregard of all considerations of safety and prudence). Their historian (Colonel Tod) has remarked : "There is not a petty State in Rajputana that has not had its own Thermopylae and scarcely a city that has not produced its Leonidas." Among all the Rajput States the State of Mewar has produced the greatest heroes and warriors, and the greatest name in the annals of Mewar is that of Rana Pratap. "Pratap succeeded to the title and renown of an ancient house, but without a capital, without resources, his kindred and clans dispirited by reverses ; yet possessed by the noble spirit of his race he meditated the recovery of Chitor, the vindication of the honour of his house and the restoration of its power. The wily Moghal [Akbar] arrayed against Pratap, his kindred in faith as well as blood. The princes of Marwar, Amber, Bikaner, and even Boondi, late his firm ally, took part with Akbar and upheld despotism. Nay, even his own brother,

'Sagarji, deserted him. But the magnitude of the peril confirmed the fortitude of Pratap, who vowed in the words of the bard, 'to make his mother's milk resplendent'; and he amply redeemed his pledge. Single-handed for a quarter of a century did he withstand the combined efforts of the empire, at one time carrying destruction into the plains, at another flying from rock to rock, feeding his family from the fruits of his native hills, and rearing the nursling hero Amra, amidst savage beasts and scarce less savage men, a fit heir to his prowess and revenge. The mere idea that 'the son of Bappa Rawal should bow the head to mortal man', was insupportable, and he spurned every overture, which had submission for its basis, or the degradation of uniting his family by marriage with the Tartar, though lord of countless multitudes." (Tod).

The same spirit of fearlessness, devotion and chivalry, was shown in the life of the last Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, who sacrificed everything—including his beloved sons, two of whom, little boys, were walled up alive—to champion the cause of the downtrodden and oppressed ones, and the cause of justice and religion. The great Guru's claim was that he would make "sparrows" give fight to "hawks" and one man challenge a quarter and a lakh of troops. His Khalsas proved the most formidable fighters India has known: they not only overturned the Mogul empire but also proved themselves the only Indian troops, who, without proper weapons, could withstand on many a field the disciplined, finely equipped regiments of the British army. Shivaji, the creator of the Maratha empire, was another matchless patriot and warrior. A country that could produce a Pratap, a Gobind Singh, and a Shivaji, has no reason to hang down its head in the hall of kings and warriors, men of valour and chivalry.

The Muslim conquerors of India, from the  
 Muhammad Kasim who conquered Sind  
 in 712 A. D. to Babur, who founded the  
 Moghul Empire in 1526, were foreigners.

They were mighty warriors, but they cannot be classed as Indians. It is only from Akbar onwards that the Muslim Emperors identified themselves with India, and can be mentioned with pride by an Indian. For three and a half-centuries, from the proclamation of Kut'b-ud-din as Sultan of Delhi in the commencement of the 13th century to the reign of Akbar in the latter half of the sixteenth century, the Muslim rulers of Northern India were, so to say, strangers maintaining an armed camp. South India preserved for long its independence from the Muslim rule, and the great Hindu Kingdom of Vijaynagar in the South continued the Hindu traditions right upto the sixteenth century. Akbar succeeded in bringing a large part of India under his sway and Aurangzebe extended the Moghul conquests still further, but the Moghul empire lasted only for a short while after Aurangzebe, and the descendants of Aurangzebe were puppets and pensioners until the last of them was bundled off from Delhi after the Indian Mutiny of 1857. It was mostly the Hindu races, the Sikhs, the Marathas, and the Rajputs, from whom the British took over the sovereignty of India. At no time in the five or six centuries which elapsed between the defeat of the last Hindu Emperor of India (Prithwi Raj,) and the rise of the British rule in India, was the Hindu military spirit entirely crushed or the rule of Hindu *rajās* completely abolished. The Indian of today must, of course, take the same pride in the military achievements, wars and conquests of the Moghul monarchs and their generals and viceroys, as in those of the Rajputs, Marathas and Sikhs. A noteworthy point in this connection is that from the time of Akbar onwards many of the generals and even

commanders-in-chief of the Moghul armies were Hindus. It was a Hindu General who was sent by Aurangzebe, the most fanatical of Moghul Emperors, to fight Shivaji the rebel. Similarly, the Muslim warriors attained to high and commanding positions in the armies of Hindu rulers. The spirit of valour and chivalry, the truly martial spirit, was kept up in India until the advent of the British rule in India.

In the British period India has known a peace which she did not know for several centuries, but the martial spirit has not been encouraged—with, of course, untoward results. As Col. Tod said: "What must be the result, when each Rajput may hang up his lance in the hall, convert his sword to a ploughshare, and make a basket of his buckler? What but the prostration of every virtue? To be great, to be independent, its martial spirit must be cherished; happy if within the bounds of moderation." Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyar, member of the Executive Council, Madras, and President, Recruitment Committee for India Defence Force, complained in 1929 that a policy of distrust "has continued to inspire the [British] military policy in India down to the present moment. It is part of this policy that Indians should be carefully excluded from the Artillery and all branches of the military service requiring any scientific knowledge. It is part of this policy that Indians should not receive any training which could develop initiative and capacity for leadership..... When Indians ask for responsible government, they are told that they cannot expect full responsible government until they can defend themselves and when they ask that they should be trained for undertaking the defence of the country, they are denied adequate facilities for the purpose." Things have improved since Sir Sivaswamy made this complaint, and some Indians have received King's Commissions in the various fighting forces, but

very much still remains to be done to revive the martial spirit in India, and make Indians fit and capable enough to defend their country against attacks from abroad.

Aggressiveness and self-aggrandisement being repugnant to the Indian character, the Indian King-ship. kings and warriors simply cannot be

Attilas or Chengiz Khans, Caesars or Napoleons, Cortezes or Hitlers. At one time the Indian had colonies all over the world, and even now Ceylon and the islands and countries in Indo-China and the East Indies preserve several items of their religion, customs and names, derived from the mother-country, but it was never the ideal of the Indians to keep others down by military domination. The essence of Indian system of government is to be seen in the autonomous village communities which excited in the last century the admiration of Sir Charles Metcalfe: "The village communities are little republics having nearly everything they can want within themselves and almost independent of any foreign nation. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down, revolution succeeds revolution, and Pathan, Moghul, Mahratta, Sikh, English are all masters in turn, but the village communities remain the same. This union of village communities, each one forming a separate little State in itself, is in a high degree conducive to their happiness, and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence."

We read of the *Ashwamedha* sacrifice in ancient India by kings who challenged anyone to contest their overlordship of the whole country, and that makes it clear that India had kings and Emperors who ruled over the whole country. Such names as that of Bharata (who gave his name to the entire country) or Rama and

Judhishtira in the legendary times, and that of Asoka, Jarsha, Vikramaditya in the Hindu times, or those of Allauddin Khilji, Akbar and Aurangzebe in the Muslim period, stand out prominent as those of Kings whose rule extended over the whole or the major part of India. The world has shrunk since then, and has become relatively small because of the annihilation of time and space by the discoveries of Science. So the extent of the sovereignty of these bygone Emperors must be judged in relation to the then known world and the difficulty of communications.



Asoka was fond of declaring that all men were his children, for whom as their father he desired every kind of prosperity and happiness both in this world and the next and that his governors were created for the welfare and happiness of the governed, who were committed to the care as a child is committed to a skilful nurse. And his sense of responsibility to his people made him work very hard as a public servant. The most important administrative innovation of Asoka was his creation of a new department for the spread of the Dharma as defined by him, and his recognition of the principle that the first care of the state was the moral development of the people. Foreign missions are a unique feature of Asoka's administration. These missions were of the nature of welfare work among the peoples of other countries for which the Indian king provided the money out of his large-hearted liberality. The horrors of a single war convinced him that it was an absolute wrong and evil, which should have no place in his scheme of affairs. A whole empire pledged itself to peace as an absolute good on its own initiative and inspiration without reference to its neighbouring states. Asoka thus stands out easily as the first of the peace makers of the world. The legends attribute his conversion to Buddhism to this man and that but it was really due to his remorse for the sin of the Kalinga war." (Adapted from Mookerji's *Men and Thought in Ancient India*.)

Akbar, "the greatest monarch that ever sat on an Asiatic throne," the fourth centenary of whose birthdate is now being celebrated in India (15th October, 1942), was one of the most remarkable personalities history has recorded. He was born and cradled in poverty and hardship and succeeded to the throne of Delhi at the early age of 13. With a tact marvellous in one so young, he released himself from the

leading strings of his guardian, Bairam Khan, and embarked on his mission of uniting India under one Government. With "a kindness of heart and religious toleration far in advance of his time" he won the sympathies of the Hindus who had stood aloof from his forbears and his predecessors in the sovereignty of Delhi. He allied himself and his family by marriage to the proudest Rajput houses, (with the single exception of the Rana of Mewar), and appointed Hindus to be his Generals, and Finance Ministers. By his brilliant strategy he conquered the greater part of India, and then proceeded to consolidate his conquests by an admirable series of reforms in which he was helped by Abul Fazl, Todarmal, and other capable Hindu and Muslim ministers. Akbar undertook reforms like the abolition of *Suttee* (or the burning of a widow on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband), the *Jaziya* system (poll-tax levied on the non-Muslims), and the sacrifices of animals. He initiated discussions on matters religious, and proved to be a great patron of literature and arts. Some of the best pieces of architecture in India were his work. He founded *Din Illahi* (Divine Religion) to bring together people of all creeds and communities. Akbar has sometimes been blamed for holding fairs where he could feast his eyes on beautiful damsels. What we ought to remember is his dream of a united India, his great religious toleration, and his essentially spiritual outlook on life—an outlook reflected in the words he carved on the great archway at Fatehpur Sikri: "Jesus, on whom be peace, has said: 'The World is but a bridge: You are to pass over it, and not to build your dwellings upon it'".

## CHAPTER 11.

## PAST AND PRESENT.

Nature's lavish  
gifts.

Nature continues to be lavish of her gifts to India and the Indian people. She has not abated of her riches or bounties. Even now : careful student of India's natural wealth and resources must write : "Just think how lucky a country like India is—and how rich it ought to be—which has all types of men, all sort of land and all kinds of climate ! It means that India is a country which has, somewhere or other, all the possible raw materials for making all the things its people want. It means that we Indians can grow or make in India almost anything we require. Can you imagine, for instance, cotton being grown in England or apples in Arabia ? But in India we can have *swadeshi* cotton and *swadeshi* apples". (*Our India* : by Minoo Masani). The Himalayas are still there, the highest mountains in the world and "thanks to these friendly mountains, India's climate is so pleasant that an Englishman described it as delightful in *all* parts of the country for some months of the year and in *some* parts of the country *all* the year round". The Indus, the Ganges, and the Brahmaputra and other great rivers still flow from the mountains to the ocean providing the country with water, irrigating the soil and providing a means of transport. "Also they are still dropping mud on the land and making it more fertile". The monsoon still visits India every year, watering the parched plains. The tremendous man-power of nearly 400 millions is still available as well as 185 millions of cattle "a third of the whole world's stock" and 87 millions sheep and goats which is a seventh of the world total". India continues to have as a gift from nature one hundred million acres of thick woods and ready-made forests, "nearly a fifth of

our cultivable land" which, it has been calculated, "can keep us supplied with 100,000,000 tons of wood in the year, without being any the thinner or the worse for it!" In the production of the means of existence India is still the most fortunate country in the world being next to Russia and the U. S. A. in the production of wheat, (producing 7% of the world output), next to China in the production of rice (producing 26% of the world output), highest in the production of sugar (producing 18% of the world's output), next to the U. S. A in the production of tobacco (producing 22% of the world's output), and also the production of cotton (producing 15% of the world's output), and next to China in the production of tea (producing 23% of the world's output). The production of coal in India is "only 28 million metric tons a year, although we have coal reserves estimated at 53,000 millions tons", but in iron India has "the world's largest reserves, next to that of the United States and of France". In Manganese ore India produces a sixth of the world total, while in bauxite (from which aluminium is refined) India, as has already been stated, has 49% of the world's output.

A rapid survey of the first two chapters of Minoo Masani's eminently readable book *Our India* will give anybody an idea of the staggering, nay, unequalled, natural wealth and resources of India. But when it comes to the condition of the Indians at the present day, it is another story altogether, as Minoo Masani is careful to remind us. "Some 90 out of every 100 people in India live in villages and 72 depend for their livelihood on agriculture—the cultivation of land. There are crores and crores of such people, spread over 7 lakhs of villages." Many of these cultivators "are without land and have to hire themselves out, at three or four annas a

Present miserable condition of the Indian people.

day." Millions of them do not get even "one square meal" a day. "If you stood ten Indians in a line to represent us, seven would be like my Indian—agriculturists, that is, those who cultivate the land; the eighth would be a factory worker; the ninth would be a shop-keeper or a clerk; and the tenth would be a business man, or a land-owner, or a lawyer, or a doctor." The factory worker and shop-keeper or a clerk earn not more than a rupee or two a day on which to maintain a whole family. It is only the tenth man who has the wherewithal to live comfortably and enjoy the amenities of life in the country or in towns. In the West, only 10 out of 100, or at the most 25 out of 100, work on the land—on high wages, and with holidays and vacations and all possible amenities—while the rest live in *beautifully appointed rooms and tenements, with means of enjoyment*. The average income of an Indian is perhaps less than the pocket money of a child in the rich countries of Europe and America.

The "teeming millions" of India live on the verge of starvation and are steeped in filth, disease, and ignorance. To quote Minoo Masani again, "Learned professors in our universities have estimated that the ordinary peasant in our country with a wife and three children has to live along with his family on much less than Rs. 27 a month, which is the average income for all kinds of Indians rolled into one. Such are the starvation and the filth and the wretched homes in which they are born that little babies die like flies before they are even an year old." The expectation of life of an Indian is, averagely, only 27 years, as against 60 for a Frenchman and 70 for a New Zealander. To gauge the ignorance of the Indian it is only necessary to remember that the Educational Commissioner with the Government of India wrote in his report for 1938-39 that with all the progress made in recent years the percentage of pupils under instruction to the total population was

5.64, the percentage of male scholars to the male population being 8.56, and that of female scholars to the female population being 2.52.

This is India's present condition after the "enlightened" rule of the Britishers for 200 years. As against that let us have a peep at India's past as recorded by writers other than

liars. Not to speak of the Vedic times of the Golden Age of India, the Indians who lived 5000 years ago were materially better and happier than their descendants in the twentieth century. Says Sir John Marshall: "That by the above date city life in Harappa and Mohenjodaro was already remarkably well-organized and that the material culture of the people was relatively highly developed, is evident. Indeed the roomy and well-built houses and the degree of luxury denoted by the presence in them of walls and bath-rooms, betoken a social condition of the citizens, at least equal to that found in Sumer, and markedly in advance of that prevailing in contemporary Babylonia and Egypt, where the royal monuments of the kings—palaces, tombs and temples—may have been superior to anything of their class to be found in India, but where no private dwelling houses of the citizens have been discovered at all comparable with those unearthed in India". As for the industrial arts, "Numerous spindle wheels in the debris of the houses attest the practice of spinning and weaving, and scraps of a fine woven material, which appears to be linen, have also been found. The ornaments of the rich were of silver and gold or copper plated with gold, of blue and white ivory, carnelian, jadestone, and multicolor stones of various kinds. For the poor, they were mainly of shell or terra cotta..... Besides gold and silver, the Indus people were familiar with copper, tin and lead. Copper they used freely for weapons, implements and domestic utensils; daggers, knives, hatchets, sickles, celts, chisels, vessels,

figurines and personal ornaments, amulets, wire, etc. Most of these objects are wrought by hammering, but examples of cast copper are not unknown." This was the utmost standard of comfort known in those times and Indians were the most prosperous nation in the world. As against that, in these days, for everything from a needle or a pin to a motor-car and a ship, India has to rely on foreign nations to whom she supplies raw materials to be made into finished goods in gigantic factories.

In the Buddhist period the rural economy of India was "based chiefly on a system of village communities of land owners or what in Europe was known as village proprietorship." *"There was security, there was independence, there were landlords and no paupers. The mass of the people held it degradation to which only dire misfortune would drive them, to work for hire."* (Rhys Davids) And now a vast majority in this land of "coolies" work for hire on a pittance of three or four annas a day! The concluding remarks in the chapter on Economic conditions in the *Cambridge History of India* volume devoted to Ancient India are: "And we have seen agriculture diligently and amicably carried on by practically the whole people as a toilsome but most natural and necessary pursuit. We have seen crafts and commerce flourishing, highly organised corporately and locally, under conditions of individual and corporate competition, the leading men thereof the friends and counsellors of kings. We have found 'labour' largely hereditary, yet, wherewithal, a mobility and initiative, anything but rigid, revealed in the exercise of it. And we have discovered a 'thorough familiarity with money and credit before the seventh century A. D.'". (The "seventh century A. D." is an allusion to the wrong notion entertained in a leading historical work on economics that "the Chinese alone, and





remain quite unmolested. Besides, they neither ravage enemy's land with fire, nor cut down its trees." (*Ancient India* by Mc Crindle). It is no wonder that in a familyless and chivalrous India it was difficult to find a man who would speak a lie or steal or hurt anyone. 'Hindus lived frugal, happy lives. Wine was never drunk except at the sacrifices, when the *Soma* juice was consumed by the priests. The chief article of food was rice-pottage. Polygamy was indeed common among the upper classes but women enjoyed great liberty. They studied philosophy and could take monastic vows. The seclusion of the female sex was only introduced in Mohammedan times. *Sati*, the terrible custom so common in later India, was only practised among two tribes, and is mentioned as a curiosity, whence we may conclude that it was very unusual... The Indians enjoyed a great and well-founded reputation for probity..... They left their houses unguarded, made no written contracts, and no written laws. They seldom went to law. Legal cases were decided according to immemorial custom by the local *panchayat*..... The people of Pataliputra dressed well in flowered muslins embroidered with jewels, and an umbrella was carried by an attendant behind the head of a noble when he went into the road. Kleitarchus, however, found that in other, poorer parts of India, they wore fillets (turbans, no doubt) on their long hair, and robes of plain white muslin or linen" (Rawlinson). Such descriptions appear to the Indian of today as fairy tales.

It is not necessary to give any details or authorities to testify to the commanding position of India (among the great and prosperous countries of the world) in the days of the Muslim rulers, especially the Moghul Emperors. Not all the raids of Chengiz Khans or Tamerlanes could take away more than a fraction of India's wealth, and not all

the wealth of medieval Venice or Persia could come up to the prosperity of an Indian province. The imaginations of adventurers in Asia and Europe were filled with dreams of the wealth of India. As soon as the route via Cape of Good Hope was discovered, swarms of European traders rushed to acquire the riches of India, and in course of time a company of merchant-adventurers became the rulers of India. Even one hundred years ago, things were not so bad in India as now, else a British Governor could not have written: "I do not exactly understand what is meant by the 'Civilization' of the Hindus. In the knowledge of the theory and practice of good government, and in an education which, by banishing prejudice and superstition, opens the mind to receive instruction of every kind, they are inferior to Europeans. But if a good system of agriculture, unrivalled manufacturing skill, a capacity to produce whatever can contribute to either luxury or convenience, schools established in every village for teaching reading, writing and arithmetic, the general practice of hospitality and charity amongst each other and, above all, a treatment of the female sex, full of confidence, respect and delicacy, are among the signs which denote a civilized people, then the Hindus are not inferior to the nations of Europe, and if civilization is to become an article between the two countries, I am convinced that this country [England] will gain by the import cargo." (Sir Thomas Munro). In the course of only one hundred years everything has evaporated—good system of agriculture, unrivalled manufacturing skill, chivalrous treatment of the female sex, schools established in every village.....and we are left with a state of things which goaded a spinster, Miss Katherine Mayo, to write of India as a plague-spot among the nations!

For this state of things, no doubt, many causes could

of wood and drawers of water in our own country, is stereotyped." (G. K. Gokhale).

It is a happy augury for the future that both the British rulers and the Indian ruled have realised that the system of subjection of one nation by another must go. The British have committed themselves to letting India have self-government, as soon as possible, after the present world-war is over. But the lovers of Indian freedom want that this change should be brought about immediately. And a struggle is going on. The world events are moving so fast that nothing can be said for certainty in the politics of any country. Everything is in the melting pot. It does not require, however, a super-natural intelligence to forecast that, in the new world-order (to come), the extraordinary blindness or indifference or self-interest which made the western nations leave out of account one half of mankind\* (gathered in China and India), and confined their attention to their own little principalities and big estates, will have to be replaced by a sense of fairness and equality—in their own interest as much as in the interest of the teeming millions of China . . .

western provinces of Punjab, Kashmir, Sind etc, wherein Muslims form a majority of the population, and sometimes a predominant majority.)

Now it is a fact that Hinduism, the greatest synthesis of religions and cultures the world has known, has not succeeded to absorbing the Muslim within its religious fold or social structure.

Hinduism—a synthesis.

"The Muslim conquest of India differs fundamentally from all preceding invasions in one respect. The Muslims came to India as a new element which the oldest inhabitants could not absorb. The Greek, Scythian, Mongolian and Parthian invaders had, a few generations after their settlement in this land, been completely Hinduized in name, speech, manners, religion, dress and ideas. In the second century before Christ, a Greek named Heliiodorus the son of Dion, when travelling in India on an embassy, could adore Vishnu and erect a column in honour of that Hindu god." "In the first century of the Christian era, some families that bear Persian names are found settled in Western India and patronizing Brahmans and Buddhist monks alike...At first the Scythians (Sakas) in India used to keep up their connection with their far off homeland west of the Bolan Pāss.....But a few generations later we find the Sakas completely naturalized in India and absorbed into the Hindu population. So, too, the Hun invaders of the fifth century A. D., after many fights with the Gupta empire, lost the chance of political domination in India, and settled down as peaceful common people, contributing tribes to various Hindu castes and professions. Thus, one recognized Rajput clan bears the name of Hun..... This moral transformation of savage foreigners is the greatest glory of India, and a proof of the death-defying vitality of Hinduism, considered not as a dogmatic creed (which it never was), but as a social force and civilizing agency. The spirit of India has triumphed

over time and change and kept the composite Indian people's mind as active and keen as in the best days of pure Aryan ascendancy. The blending of races here has not led to that intellectual and moral deterioration which is found among the present-day mixed population of what was once Spanish America. As a distinguished Orientalist [A. M. T. Jackson] has truly observed, 'The most important fact in Hindu history is overlooked (by our orthodox writers). I mean the attractive power of Hindu civilization, which has enabled it to assimilate and absorb into itself every foreign invader except the Moslem and the European. Those Indians have a poor idea of their country's greatness, who do not realize how it has tamed and civilized the nomads of Central Asia, so that wild Turkoman tribes have been transformed into some of the most famous of the Rajput royal races.'"

"But Islam is a fiercely monotheistic religion. It cannot allow any compromise with polytheism or admit a plurality of deities..... . Hence, the absorption of the Indo-Muslims into the fold of Hinduism by

But Hinduism has not absorbed the Indian Muslims.

State and society retained its original military and nomadic character,—the ruling race living merely like an army camp in the land. It was Akbar who, at the end of the sixteenth century, began the policy of giving to the people of the country an interest in the State, and making the Government undertake some socialistic functions in addition to the mere police work it had hitherto contented itself with doing. Upto Akbar's time the Muslim settler in India used to be in the land but not of it" (Jadunath Sarkar : *India through the Ages*).

Now there are two things to be remembered in this connection. One is that, except a few thousands or hundreds of thousands of the descendants of men from Central Asia and the Semitic lands, the rest of the hundred millions of Muslims in India are descended from Hindu ancestors. And these others too have had generations of ancestors who were born, who lived, and who died in India. If the Chinese Muslims, the Turkish Muslims, nay the converts to Islam in England, can become absolutely one in civilization, culture, interests with the rest of the Chinese, Turks, Englishmen and so on, why should not the Indian Muslim be identified with every other Indian in all matters save the worship of the Deity, which is entirely a private matter for everybody? Why could not every Muslim say with Iqbal, "Hindi hai hum, tan hai, Hindustan hamara" i. e. "I am a Hindi or Indian, Hindustan or India is my land", and feel that withstanding India's present fallen state his is the most glorious heritage in history, that he is a citizen of the most ancient and resplendent country in the world?

Secondly, it must be keenly realised that Islam has brought great gifts to India—which, in the words of Professor Jadunath Sarkar are, briefly, ten :—

(i) Restoration of touch with the outer world, which included the revival of an Indian navy and sea-borne trade, both of which had been lost since the decline of the Cholas.

(ii) Internal peace over a large part of India, especially north of the Vindhya.

(iii) Uniformity secured by the imposition of the same type of administration.

(iv) Uniformity of social manners and dress among the upper classes, irrespective of creed.

(v) Indo-Saracen art, in which the mediaeval Hindu and Chinese schools were blended together. Also, a new style of architecture, and the promotion of industries of a refined kind (e. g. shawl, inlaying work, kinkhab, muslin, carpet etc.)

(vi) A common *lingua franca*, called Hindustani or Rekhta, and an official prose style (mostly the creation of Hindu munshis writing Persian, and even borrowēd by the Maratha *chitnis* for their own vernacular).

(vii) Rise of our vernacular literature, as the fruits of peace and economic prosperity under the empire of Delhi.

Science and Art, in Chivalry, Humanity and Valour—there would be no need of Hindu-Muslim unity, for both Hindus and Muslims would be truly Indians then, and no power on earth could hold India in bondage.

## CHAPTER 12.

### AWAKENING.

The Western mind believes in a continual Progress an ever-advancing line or rank, but the Indian knows that the story of mankind is that of cycles of birth and death, rise and fall, progression and retrogression. India was caught in such a downward curve a few hundreds of years ago, the lowest point or nadir being reached in the eighteenth century. "It was at this moment that the European wave swept over India", and almost without opposition or resistance India became dependency of a small island situated at the distance of five thousand miles. Political abjugation or loss of independence and freedom can work havoc with a great nation in the course of only a few months; the example of France is before us, where forces of disunity and disintegration came to the surface in the brief space of a year or two of loss of freedom and initiative. It speaks volumes for the immortal power and undying fire of India's spirit that these have not been extinguished in the course of two hundred years of foreign rule. Competent observers have noticed that the worst is already past, and that there is a reawakening, a renaissance, in India, which will again put India on the map of the world and give her the place of Teacher and Torch bearer of humanity which was hers for thousands of years.

It is not possible here to discuss fully the defects or



Religion not  
responsible.

deficiencies which brought India to its present position of poverty and degradation, and prepared the way for India's loss of political freedom. Some hasty people have come to the conclusion that it was India's pre-occupation with Religion and things spiritual which made for her weakness. But those who can think have realised that far from Religion and "spirituality" having brought India to a low state it is precisely these that have enabled it to survive the onslaughts of Time, the debilitating effects of hoary age. "If the majority of Indians had indeed made the whole of their lives religious in the true sense of the word," says Sri Aurobindo Ghose, than whom there is no one better qualified to speak on India's culture and destiny, "we should not be where we are now ; it was because their public life became most irreligious, egoistic, self-seeking, materialistic that they fell. It is possible, that on one side we deviated too much into an excessive religiosity, that is to say, an excessive externalisation of ceremony, rule, routine, mechanical worship, on the other into a too world-shunning asceticism which drew away the best minds who were thus lost to society instead of standing like the ancient Rishis as its spiritual support and its illuminating life-givers. But the root of the matter was the dwindling of the spiritual impulse in its generality and broadness, the decline of intellectual activity and freedom, the waning of great ideals, the loss of all

splendid and extraordinary and only for a very period sinks nearest to a complete torpor; but in comparison with its past greatness will show that decadence was marked and progressive." The I of old did have Energy and Action, Joy of Life Creative Zest. "When we look at the past of India what strikes us next is her stupendous vitality, inexhaustible power of life and joy of life, her almost unimaginably prolific creativeness. For three thousand years at least,—it is indeed much longer,—she has been creating abundantly and incessantly, lavishly, with inexhaustible many-sidedness, republics and kingdoms and empires, philosophies and cosmogonies and sciences and creeds and arts and poems and all kinds of monuments, palaces and temples and public works, communities and societies and religious orders, laws and codes and rituals, physical sciences, psychic sciences, systems of Yoga, systems of politics and administration, arts spiritual and arts worldly, trades, industries, fine crafts—the list is endless and in each item there is almost a plethora of activity." And this energy was not confined to home activities, but it flowed to distant lands and seas—Judaea Egypt and Rome; China Japan and the islands in the Archipelago. Alas! The descendants of these giants are weary with lassitude and languor, and pursued by pessimism and timid fruitless speculation!

"Secondly, there is a rapid cessation of the old free intellectual activity, a slumber of the scientific and critical mind as well as the creative intuition; what remains becomes more and more a repetition of ill-understood fragments of past knowledge. There is a petrification of the mind and life in the relics of the forms which a great intellectual past had created. Old authority and rule become rigidly despotic, and as always then happens,

Lack of Critical Spirit.

lose their real sense and spirit." In the past, Indians had "opulent intellectuality" (in addition to "opulent vitality") which filled them with an insatiable curiosity and aesthetic feeling, resulting in a literature which "embraced all life, politics and society, all the arts from painting to dancing, all the sixty-four accomplishments, everything then known that could be useful to life or interesting to the mind". "There is no historical parallel for such an intellectual labour and activity before the invention of printing and the facilities of modern science". The modern Indian has forgotten the spirit and clung to the letter of scriptures and rules; the enquiring mind has been laid aside. Hence stagnation, confusion, and noxious matter: religion becomes superstition, ideals turn into idols, cleanliness becomes "untouchability", and instead of positive and beneficent impulses and forces, taboos and negations occupy our life. Where there was Life and Light, Death and Darkness have crept in.

Thirdly, "spirituality remains but burns no longer with the large and clear flame of knowledge of former times, but in intense jets and in a dispersed action which replaces the old magnificent synthesis and in which certain spiritual truths are emphasised to the neglect of others. This diminution amounts to a certain failure of the great endeavour which is the whole meaning of Indian culture, a falling short in the progress towards the perfect spiritualisation of the mind and the life." India lost Unity and Vision, the power of Synthesis and Harmony. It was India's distinguishing excellence in the past that she could carry "each tangent of philosophic thought, each line of spiritual experience to its farthest point" and then formulate all of them into a grand Synthesis. In India "the ideal of opulent living and the ideal of poverty were carried to the extreme of regal splen-

Waning of the  
power of Synthesis.

loubt alarming: Indians became crude imitators of a foreign culture. But Immortal India could not so perish. After the initial deadening effect of the impact of the West upon India had passed away, "the national mind turned a new eye on its past culture, re-awoke to its sense and import, but also at the same time saw it in relation to modern knowledge and ideas. Out of this awakening vision and impulse the Indian renaissance is arising, and that must determine its future tendency."

In literature, arts and sciences, in the fields of politics and commerce, Indians are forging ahead, and on land sea and air Indian warriors have shown their heroic mettle. A bright future certainly awaits India.

That this Renaissance should be seen in its glory and splendour, and the gospel of Tagore and Gandhi should spread over the world—  
*India's Destiny.* —and save it—it is necessary that India should be a free country. Such a freedom is necessary in order that India know herself, but it is still more necessary in order that India should save the world. The Western civilization, with its insistence on materialistic pursuits, self-aggrandizement, competition, and exploitation of the weak and the inferior, has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. It must give place to something nobler, something higher, and that India alone can give to the world. The Providence that watches and fashions the destinies of nations will see that in due time India fulfils her mission of saving the soul of the world. India is not Japan, an apt pupil of the Western masters, ready to fight the West with its own weapons of brutality, force and ruthlessness; India remains true to her great traditions and spiritual way of life. She is patiently waiting for the world-events to form in the pattern appropriate for the realisation of her own freedom

and the fulfilment of her mission to humanity at large  
Her children, meanwhile, send up their prayer :

O young through all thy immemorial years !  
Rise, Mother, rise, regenerate from thy gloom,  
And like a bride high-mated with the spheres,  
Beget new glories from thy ageless womb !

The nations that in fettered darkness weep  
Crave thee to lead them where great mornings break,  
Mother, O Mother, wherefore dost thou sleep ?  
Arise, answer for thy children's sake !

Thy future calls thee with a manifold sound  
To crescent honours, splendours, victories vast ;  
Waken, o slumbering Mother and be crowned,  
Who once were Empress of the Sovereign Past.

(Mrs. Sarojini Naidu.)

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